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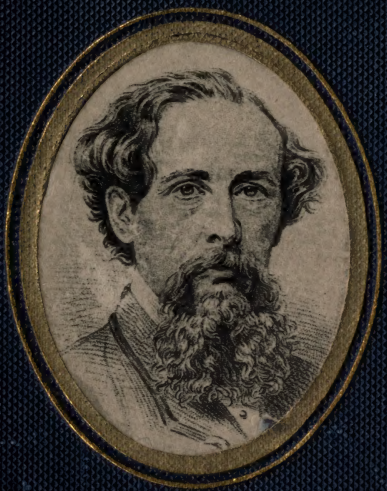

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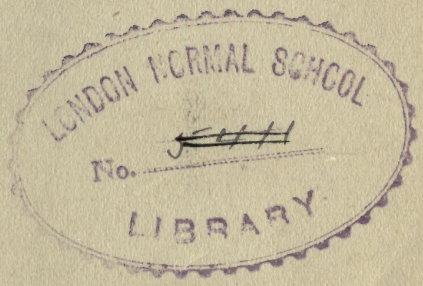

CHARLES DICKENS.

From the Painting by D. Maclise, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

CHARLES DICKENS

AND HIS FRIENDS

STACKS

BY

W. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD.

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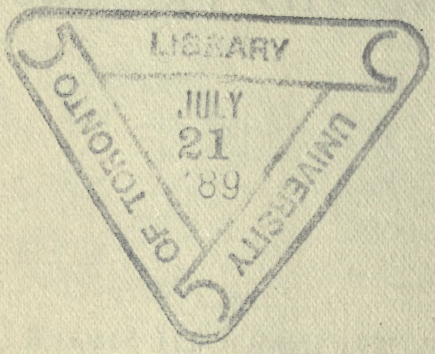

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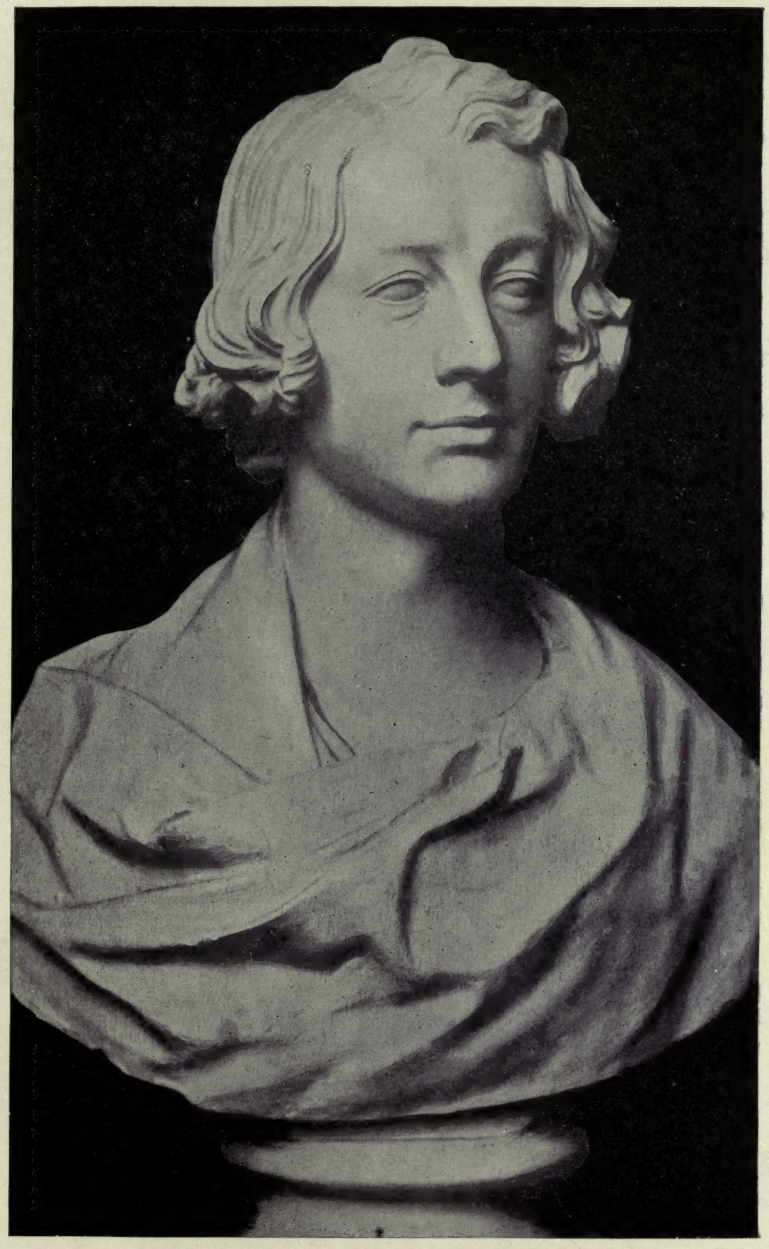

CHARLES DICKENS (1842).

From the Bust by Henry Dexter, modelled during Dickens's first visit to America.

TO

GEORGE SOMES LAYARD

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CHARLES DICKENS

AND HIS FRIENDS

I

THE STARTING-POINT

ON March 26, 1836, there appeared in *The Times* an advertisement announcing the immediate publication of the first part of "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, edited by Boz," and within a few months of this date, Charles Dickens, aged twenty-four, was a famous man. Hitherto he had been known in his own immediate circle as an admirable parliamentary reporter, and the writer of amusing descriptive articles and facetious sketches, a selection of which had been brought out in volume form under the title "Sketches by Boz." He was then living in Furnival's Inn —the actual building, alas, destroyed, though the name of it remains—and was engaged to be married to Catherine Thomson Hogarth, eldest daughter of George Hogarth, one of his colleagues upon the *Morning Chronicle*. To Miss Hogarth he was married, two days after the appearance of the first part of "Pickwick," in Saint Luke's Church, Chelsea, of which Charles Kingsley's father was then rector. What more suitable starting-point could be selected for our adventure?

Once again may be told the story of the first meeting of Dickens and Thackeray, related by the latter at the

Royal Academy Dinner in 1858. "I can remember," he said, "when Mr Dickens was a very young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works in covers which were coloured light green and came out once a month, that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writings; and I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn with two or three drawings in my hand, which, strange to say, he did not find suitable."

In March, 1837, Dickens moved from Furnival's Inn to Doughty Street, Bloomsbury, a street which has changed but little since those days, and which is connected with the names of several in Dickens's circle, such as Edmund Yates, Sydney Smith, and Shirley Brooks, who all at one time or another resided there. In 1837 there was a gate at each end of the short wide street, and a lodge wherein sheltered a stately porter, with gold-laced hat and mulberry-coloured coat with buttons that bore the Doughty arms. Yates gives an amusing description of his residence there in the 'fifties; he found the neighbourhood both dull and noisy, painting an almost pathetic picture of "the hot summer Sunday afternoons, when the pavement would be red-hot, and the dust, and bits of straw, and scraps of paper would blow fitfully about with every little puff of air, and the always dull houses would look infinitely duller with their blinds down, and no sound would fall upon the ear save the distant hum of the cabs in Holborn, or the footfall of some young person in service going to afternoon church"; and indeed it is very much like that to-day. But it cannot be imagined that any place was ever dull while Charles Dickens was present.

Forster gives a striking portrait of Boz at this time;

but it will be better to present one equally vivid and less well known. " Genial, bright, lively-spirited, pleasant toned," writes Mrs Cowden Clarke, " he entered into conversation with a grace and charm that made it feel perfectly natural to be chatting and laughing as if we had known each other from childhood. . . . Charles Dickens had that acute perception of the comic side of things which causes irrepressible brimming of the eyes ; and what eyes his were ! Large, dark blue, exquisitely shaped, fringed with magnificently long and thick lashes—they now swam in liquid, limpid suffusion, when tears started into them from a sense of humour or a sense of pathos, and now darted quick flashes of fire when some generous indignation at injustice, or some high-wrought feeling of admiration at magnanimity, or some sudden emotion of interest and excitement touched him. Swift-glancing, appreciative, rapidly observant, truly superb orbits they were, worthy of the other features in his manly, handsome face. The mouth was singularly mobile, full-lipped, well-shaped, and expressive ; sensitive, nay restless, in its susceptibility to impression that swayed him, or sentiment that moved him. He, who saw into apparently slightest trifles that were fraught to his perception with deepest significance ; he, who beheld human nature with insight almost superhuman, and who revered good and abhorred evil with intensity, showed instantaneously by his expressive countenance the kind of idea that possessed him." This would seem far too highly coloured a portrait, but that its essential truth is borne out by other and not so easily impressed observers.

II

JOHN FORSTER

THE name of John Forster has been mentioned, and before going farther it will be right to say somewhat of one who was so closely bound in ties of friendship to Dickens and who eventually at his friend's expressed desire became his biographer. It may be doubted whether Forster would be more than a shadowy name to this present generation were it not for his "Life of Charles Dickens," a work which lives by reason of its matter rather than its manner. Forster's other contributions to literature sleep solemnly upon our shelves—even the Life of Goldsmith, learned, ponderous, and lacking in insight. Of Forster the man it is possible to speak in terms almost warm, though it is difficult to form an exact estimate of his character. Mr Frith seems to hit the truth very fairly, "Forster was a gruff man with the kindest heart in the world." His rough, brusque manner gave a wrong impression of his character to those who were but slightly acquainted with him; he was a rough nut, but the outward shell hid a kernel kind and mellow. A "rough and uncompromising personage," Mr Percy Fitzgerald says of him. His voice was loud, so was his laugh; his face and cheeks broad; "if anyone desired to know what Dr Johnson was like, he could have found him in Forster," which is the worst ever said of him. By the way, Elia called him "Fooster," which is almost as

quaint as some of Landor's pronunciations. A pleasanter view of him is given by Mrs Cowden Clarke, who speaks of his "somewhat stately bow . . . accompanied by an affable smile and a marked courtesy that were very winning."

It was in the office of the *True Sun*, when acting as the leader of a reporters' strike, that Dickens was first seen by John Forster, who records that his "keen animation of look would have arrested attention anywhere."

Dickens, so we are told in "Fifty Years of Fleet Street," was quite alive to Forster's peculiarities, and would mimic in the most amusing way his assumption of infallibility, sometimes even to his face. He told a story, too, of dining one night with him, and that boiled beef was set upon the table unadorned with carrots. Forster rang the bell, and said to the maid, "Mary! Carrots!" Mary replied that there "weren't none." To which Forster, with a dignified wave of the hand, "Mary, *let there be carrots!*" Cheery parties were at any rate some of those given by Forster, notably one in 1833, of which Macready writes: "Forster called for me in a coach with Talfourd and Procter. I met at his lodgings Blanchard, a pleasing man, Abbott, Knowles and others. A pleasant but too indulging evening; toasts and commendations flying about. A great deal of heart, and when that is uppermost the head is generally subjected."

He was fond of entertaining his friends to dinner on Saturdays; the parties were small, the menus not too lengthy, the food and wine of the best. It was a kindly trait in his hospitality that those who came to his table usually found he had provided for them one or other of their favourite dishes—James White with apple-pudding, Thackeray with three-cornered

jam tarts, for examples; the host's taste turning often toward tripe and to fried liver and bacon. "Fare which pleased everybody," says Whitwell Elwin, "was not without its cheering influence on dinners which could not be excelled in social charm. There was no made conversation between men remarkable for genius, or talent, or knowledge, or experience, and who, for the most part, had the ease and freedom of old acquaintanceship. With an audience quick to understand whatever was uttered they spoke from the fullness of their minds, without rivalry, without ostentation, and without reserve. Forster, a consummate host, exerted his skill to put his guests on their happiest themes, and while the good fellowship was always uppermost, the observations on men, books, and things were not more sparkling and festive than they were instructive and acute." Dickens writes in one of his letters to an American friend, "I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's Inn Fields at night, as of men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine-glasses."

Forster was looked upon by his intimates as a confirmed old bachelor, though he had once been engaged to marry no less a person than the famous Letitia Elizabeth Landon, the poetess L.E.L. But in 1856 he astonished them all by marrying. Dickens wrote when he had heard of his friend's intention: "I have the most prodigious, overwhelming, crushing, astounding, blinding, deafening, pulverising, scarifying secret, of which Forster is the hero . . . after I knew it (from himself) this morning, I lay down flat as if an engine and tender had fallen upon me." His wife was the widow of Colburn, the publisher, and owned a house in Montague Square, to which Forster removed, retaining, however, his chambers in 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields,

where so many interesting meetings took place, and which figure in "Bleak House" as those of Mr Tulkinghorn. Under the same roof lived also Alfred Tennyson.

Once when Forster was awaiting a call from Count d'Orsay, he was unexpectedly summoned to his printers. "Now," he said to his servant, "you will tell the Count that I have only just gone round to call on Messrs Spottiswoode, the printers—you will observe, Messrs Spot-is-wode." However, he missed the Count, and when next he met him, his explanation was cut short by him saying, "Ah! I know, you had just gone round to *Ze Spotted Dog* — I understand." Forster worshipped almost at D'Orsay's shrine; he was heard shouting above the hub-bub of conversation at one of his dinners to his servant Henry, "Good heavens, sir, butter for the Count's flounders!"

An amusing and characteristic story of Forster was told by Dickens. When "Household Words" was sold by Messrs Bradbury and Evans, Boz was represented at the sale by Forster and Arthur Smith. When the sale was over, a friend, who had been present, hastened to Dickens to inform him of the result, adding, "I cannot resist telling you how admirable Forster was throughout; cool, prompt, and energetic, he won the day with his business-like readiness." When Dickens met Forster, he repeated this to him, and the comment made by Forster was, "I am very sorry, my dear Dickens, that I cannot return the compliment, for a damneder ass than your friend —— I never met in a business affair."

Douglas Jerrold once picked up a worn, thick stump of a pencil—belonging to Stanfield—and exclaimed, "Hullo, here is the exact counterpart of John Forster, short, thick, and full of lead."

The friendship between the two has been admirably summed up by Edmund Yates in his delightful " Recollections and Experiences " :—" Forster, partly owing to natural temperament, partly to harassing official work and ill-health, was almost as much over, as Dickens was under, their respective actual years ; and though Forster's shrewd common sense, sound judgement, and deep affection for his friend commanded, as was right, Dickens's loving and grateful acceptance of his views, and though the communion between them was never for a moment weakened, it was not as a companion ' in his lighter hour ' that Dickens in his latter days looked on Forster."

J. T. Fields makes a point :—" For Dickens he had a love amounting to jealousy. He never quite relished anybody else whom the great novelist had a fondness for, and I have heard droll stories touching this weakness."

Forster was born in the same year — 1812 — as was Dickens.

III

DOUGHTY STREET

THE success, almost overwhelming, of "Pickwick" at once brought Dickens into contact with a larger world than that in which he had been moving, or to which his birth and education gave him any right of entry. But before describing the circle into which he was so cordially welcomed and in which he maintained himself with such ease, it will be better to devote some space to his domestic and more intimate history.

Dickens's wife, as has been mentioned, was the eldest daughter of George Hogarth, who held a prominent position on the *Morning Chronicle*, a kind, accomplished man and a good musician. When the *Evening Chronicle* was started in 1837, he was appointed editor, and as such first made the personal acquaintance of his future son-in-law. Another valued friend was John Black, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, of whom Dickens frequently said, "Dear old Black! My first hearty out-and-out appreciator." He spoke with a strong Border brogue, which he brought from his birthplace, Dunse, in Berwickshire, possessed a genial gift of humour, and was a fine linguist. He was always pleased to discover a young fellow with gifts and to give him a helping hand. He came to London with a few pence as his capital, walking all the way from Berwickshire, hospitably entertained on his way by farmers and their wives. He was every inch a journalist, as is well exemplified by the following

story of an interview of his with Lord Melbourne. In the midst of their talk, his lordship said somewhat abruptly:

"Mr Black, I think you forget who I am!"

"I hope not, my lord," Black replied, somewhat taken aback and alarmed.

"Mr Black, you forget that I am the prime minister, and treat me in a manner that is, to say the least of it, somewhat uncommon. Here am I, as I have said, in the position of prime minister, in confidential intercourse with you, and always glad to see you. I have patronage at my disposal, and you never so much as hint to me that you would like me to give you a place. And, Mr Black, there is no man living to whom I would sooner give a place than yourself."

"I thank you, my lord," said Black, "but I do not want a place. I am editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, and like my work and the influence it gives me, and do not desire to change places with anybody in the world—not even your lordship."

"Mr Black, I envy you; and you're the only man I ever did."

Albany Fonblanque said of him: "Though rather rude himself in style, he had a delicate perception and appreciation of the style of others, and there was no better critic."

But to return to the Hogarths. When Dickens married, there came to live with them his wife's next youngest sister, Mary, whose terribly sudden death on the 7th of May, 1837, at the age of seventeen, deprived him of what had become to him an ideal friendship. The three of them had returned, full of high spirits, late one night from the theatre, when she was struck down with sudden illness, dying a few hours later in Dickens's arms; "the dear girl whom I loved, after my wife, more deeply and fer-

vently than anyone on earth." The shock and the grief prostrated him; work was impossible to him for many weeks; he moved for a time to Hampstead, where Forster visited him, the first occasion that he was his guest. The two men drew so closely together in friendship that shortly afterward Dickens wrote: "I look back with unmingled pleasure to every link which each ensuing week has added to the chain of our attachment. It shall go hard, I hope, ere anything but death impairs the toughness of a bond now so firmly rivetted."

"I wish you could know," he writes to Mrs Hogarth, in the autumn of the year, "how I weary now for the three rooms in Furnival's Inn, and how I miss that pleasant smile and those sweet words which, bestowed upon an evening's work, in our merry banterings round the fire, were more precious to me than the applause of a whole world would be. I can recall everything she said and did in those happy days. . . ." Then in 1843, on May 8th, he wrote to Mrs Hogarth: "After she died, I dreamed of her every night for many months—I think the better part of a year—sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a living creature, never with any of the bitterness of my real sorrow, but always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or other. And so it did." And to Forster, after Mrs Hogarth's death five years after Mary's, he wrote: "I don't think there ever was love like that I bear her."

The story was best told in his own words, and is best left untouched.

IV

MACREADY

THE concluding number of "Pickwick" was published in November, 1837, and there is a letter from Dickens to Macready, inviting him to a little dinner, to celebrate the occasion, at the Prince of Wales, in Leicester Place, Leicester Square, on a Saturday afternoon, at five for half-past five precisely, at which there were also to be present Serjeant Talfourd, John Forster, Harrison Ainsworth, William Jerdan, a well-known Scottish journalist, and the publishers of "Pickwick," Messrs Chapman and Hall, which firm is still so notably connected with the works of Charles Dickens under the able guidance of Mr Arthur Waugh, an eloquent and enthusiastic Dickensian. Macready from this time on to the end was one of Dickens's dearest friends. In his diary, under date June 16, 1837, Macready records, "Forster came into my room," at Covent Garden Theatre, of which he was then manager, "with a gentleman, whom he introduced to me as Dickens, alias Boz—I was glad to see him." Forster he had first met at Richmond in 1833, in the drawing-room of the house in which Edmund Kean lay dead.

William Charles Macready was born in 1793, of theatrical stock, being the son of an Irish theatrical manager, and was, with the exception of Phelps, the last of the great school of actors of whom Garrick, Mrs Siddons, the

Kembles and Kean were the most brilliant. He served a hard apprenticeship in the Provinces before he reached and made his name upon the London stage. He was a man of culture and wide reading, and of his character we should be inclined to say that he was a somewhat petulant, moody grumbler, but for the evidence to the contrary of those who knew him most intimately. He was pious in the best sense of the word, and his life long fought courageously to overcome the violent temper which more than once brought him into trouble. With his "calling" he never seems to have been thoroughly contented, and more than once we find him debating whether or not he should continue in it. "The only condition that could reconcile me to the profession . . . was to hold its highest walks. . . . My wish was to make the trial of my talents in some other profession, and the Church offered me apparently facilities for the attempt," so that, probably, a notable parson was lost to us. Contemporary evidence goes to show that he was an actor of impressive powers, and from his Diaries we gather that he certainly had the genius of taking pains, as in these two extracts: "1833. January 2nd. My performance this evening of Macbeth afforded me a striking evidence of the necessity there is for thinking over my characters previous to playing, and establishing by practice, if necessary, the particular modes of each scene and important passage. . . . It was crude and uncertain, though spirited and earnest; but much thought is yet required to give an even energy and finished style to all the great scenes of the play, except, perhaps, the last, which is among the best things I am capable of." Again, January 4th, "My acting was coarse and crude—no identification of myself with the scene, and, what increased my chagrin

on the subject, some persons in the pit gave frequent vent to indulgent and misplaced admiration. The consciousness of unmerited applause makes it quite painful and even humiliating to me." He was most certainly his own sternest critic.

Recording his impressions of Macready as King John, Frith speaks of "Macready's fearful whisper—when, having placed his mouth close to Hubert's ear, and dropping his half-hearted hints of his desire for Arthur's death, he throws off the mask, and in two words, '*the grave*,' he makes his wish unmistakeable—was terrific: the two words were uttered in a whisper that could be heard at the back of Drury Lane gallery, and the effect was tremendous. You felt as if you were assisting at a terrible crime."

It was not only as an actor but as a manager also that Macready rendered good service to the stage; it was by and through him that Lytton's best plays, "The Lady of Lyons" and "Money" amongst them, were produced, and a very true friendship existed between author and actor. They first met at a party in October, 1834, and Macready describes Bulwer—as he then was—as very good-natured and intelligent. He also speaks with enthusiasm of a pretty Mrs Forster, "whom," he quaintly says, "I should like very much as any other man's wife, though not so well as my own." He urged Bulwer to write a play, and was informed that one, on Cromwell, had already been written, but that the greater part of it had been lost. Lytton impresses us as very willing to take advice upon his work—an unusual virtue in dramatists.

"Ion" Talfourd was another crony of Macready, and once played a very pretty joke upon him, which he took in

good part. In 1839 Dickens brought Macready a play to read, named "Glencoe," with which the actor was well pleased. Dining some few nights later with Talfourd, Dickens being absent on the score of ill-health and Forster completing the party, the conversation turned upon plays. Macready mentioned that one of striking character had recently come into his hands. The remainder of the tale he shall tell himself:—"Talfourd asked me the title. I told him 'Glencoe.' He questioned me about its possible melodramatic tendency. I told him, that the treatment avoided the melodrama of the stage; that the style was an imitation of his writing, but without the point that terminated his speeches; that the story was well managed and dramatic; and that I intended to act it. At last to my utter astonishment, he pulled out two books from his pocket and said, 'Well, I will no longer conceal it—it is my play'; and he gave each of us a copy! I never in my life experienced a greater surprise. . . . Forster affected great indignation, and really stormed; I laughed, loud and long; it was really a romance to me."

After the first night of "Ion," in May, 1836, there was an interesting gathering at Talfourd's, among those present being Wordsworth, whom Macready held in high reverence, Walter Savage Landor, Stanfield, Robert Browning, Miss Mitford, Miss Ellen Tree, and others. Macready sat between Wordsworth and Landor, with Browning opposite, "happily placed," as he says himself. He pointed out to Wordsworth the likeness between a passage in "Ion" and some lines the poet had once quoted to him from a MS. tragedy of his. "Yes, I noticed them," said Wordsworth, and then quoted them again:

" Action is transitory—a step—a blow,
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
'Tis done ; and in the after vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed."

Landor talked of plays, admitting that he had not the constructive faculty. Macready in rash chaff challenged Miss Mitford to write a play ; she quickly replied, " Will you act it ? " Macready was silent.

Robert Browning's health was proposed by Talfourd, who acclaimed him the youngest poet in England. On the way home Macready caught up Browning, and said to him, " Write a play, Browning, and keep me from going to America." Said Browning, " Shall it be historical and English ; what do you say to a drama on Strafford ? " Later Macready brought to the footlights Browning's " Strafford " and " The Blot on the 'Scutcheon." He describes Browning as " very popular with the whole party ; his simple and enthusiastic manner engaged attention and won opinions from all present ; he looks and speaks more like a youthful poet than any man I ever saw."

In Macready's Diaries there are notes of many memorable dinners, one of which may well be selected as typical and interesting. It was a meeting of the Shakespeare Club on March 30, 1839.

The Shakespeare Club held its nightly meetings in a large room in the Piazza Hotel, under the Colonnade in Covent Garden. Serjeant Ballantine asserts that Forster's temper, which " was not a very comfortable one to deal with," was mainly the cause of the club breaking up, or rather down. This is borne out by Charles Knight, who describes a meeting—a dinner—at which Dickens occupied the chair. Forster, while proposing

CHARLES DICKENS.
From a Sketch by D. Maclise, R.A.

a toast, lost his temper at some foolish interruptions; the evening was spoiled and the meeting broke up.

It was at the Piazza, which he designated as Cuttris's Coffee Room, that Dickens put up in December, 1844, when he came from Italy for the reading of "The Chimes" at Forster's chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Dickens presided, and among others present at the Club meeting were Procter, Stanfield, Leigh Hunt, Maclise, Cattermole, Jerrold, Thackeray, Lever, Frank Stone, Forster—a wonderful gathering. The dinner was good, so were the songs and the speeches. Dickens spoke earnestly and eloquently in proposing Macready's health, and Macready replied earnestly—but scarcely eloquently. Leigh Hunt spoke in a rambling, conversational style, something perhaps in the manner of Mr Skimpole. "All went off in the happiest spirit," and home in boisterous spirits, there is no doubt.

Macready retired from the stage in 1851, playing Macbeth at the Haymarket to a vast and enthusiastic audience: "acted Macbeth as I never, never before acted it; with a reality, a vigour, a truth, a dignity that I never before threw into my delineation of this favourite character," he writes in words which he did not mean for any other eyes than his own. The farewell performance was followed by a farewell dinner; the list of stewards and guests included many great names in art and literature. Bulwer was in the chair, and spoke felicitously in proposing the toast of the evening: "To-day let us only rejoice that he whom we so prize and admire is no worn-out veteran retiring to a rest he can no longer enjoy—that he leaves us in the prime of his powers, with many years to come, in the course of nature, of that dignified leisure for which every public man must have sighed in the

midst of his triumphs"—and which so many are loth to seek. Forster, in proposing the toast of dramatic literature, read some lines addressed to Macready by Tennyson :—

> "Farewell, Macready, since to-night we part;
> Full-handed thunders often have confessed
> Thy power, well-used to move the public breast.
> We thank thee with our voice, and from the heart.
> Farewell, Macready, since this night we part;
> Go, take thine honours home; rank with the best,
> Garrick and statelier Kemble, and the rest
> Who made a nation purer through their Art.
> Thine is it that our drama did not die,
> Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
> And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.
> Farewell, Macready; moral, grave, sublime;
> Our Shakespeare's bland and universal eye
> Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred years on thee."

A well-meant but scarcely inspired tribute.

In responding, Macready wound up by saying, "With a heart more full than the glass I hold"—his glass was empty!

He died at Cheltenham on April 27, 1873, and was buried at Kensal Green, beside many of the loved ones of his family who had "gone before."

Lady Bancroft relates amusingly her first meeting with Macready, during his farewell appearances, when she did not find him so forbidding as she had been told that he often was. She was to act Fleance to his Macbeth :—

"'Well, I suppose you hope to be a great actress some day?' I replied quickly, 'Yes, sir.' He smiled. 'And what do you intend to play?' 'Lady Macbeth, sir,' upon which he laughed loudly . . . but he soon won my heart by saying: 'Will you have a sovereign to buy a doll with, or a glass of wine?' After a little hesitation, I answered, 'I should like both, I think.' He seemed to enjoy my

frank reply, and said laughingly, 'Good! I am sure you will make a fine actress; I can see genius through those little windows,' placing his hands over my eyes. 'But do not play Lady Macbeth too soon; begin slowly, or you may end quickly.'" Macready's prophetic insight did not play him false; Lady Bancroft, then little Marie Wilton, did make a fine actress, though she never played Lady Macbeth.

Of his character and of his acting opinions naturally differed. Charlotte Brontë writes: "I twice saw Macready act—once in *Macbeth* and once in *Othello*. I astonished a dinner-party by honestly saying I did not like him. It is the fashion to rave about his splendid acting. Anything more false and artificial, less genuinely impressive than his whole style I could scarcely have imagined." But she rather detracts from the value of her criticism by going on to say, "The fact is, the stage-system altogether is hollow nonsense. They act farces well enough; the actors comprehend their parts and do them justice. They comprehend nothing about tragedy or Shakespeare, and it is a failure. I said so; and by so saying produced a blank silence—a mute consternation." No wonder.

The rougher side of his character has been painted with some acerbity by George Augustus Sala, who never met him in private life: "he was altogether an odd person, this William Charles Macready: high-minded, generous, just; but the slave, on the stage, of a simply ungovernable temper."

But Browning said of him, "one of the most admirable and indeed fascinating characters I have ever known," and Lady Pollock records the worth of Dickens's friendship to the actor in his latter days:—"when the weight of

time and sorrow pressed him down, Dickens was his most frequent visitor ; he cheered him with narratives of bygone days ; he poured some of his own abundant warmth into his heart ; he led him into new channels of thought ; he gave readings to rouse his interest ; he waked up in him again by his vivid descriptions his sense of humour ; he conjured back his smile and his laugh—Charles Dickens was and is to me the ideal of friendship."

Of two of the others who were to make up the *Pickwick* party we may say a few words here. Harrison Ainsworth, who started his business career as a publisher but found it more profitable to write and to permit others to issue his works, attained fame with his novel of " Rookwood," published in 1834, a fame which the progress of years has somewhat dimmed. It has been asserted, though no evidence has been brought forward in support of the accusation, that Turpin's famous ride to York in this novel was written by the facile Maginn and not by Ainsworth at all. On the face of things, and judging by his other works in a similar *genre*, we may take it that there is not any truth in the assertion. Ainsworth was a more able writer than many of more lasting reputation ; perhaps some day he will come by his own again.

He lived in a comfortable house in Kilburn, where he delighted to entertain his friends ; here is a peep into his parlour :—" the time is early summer, the hour about eight o'clock in the evening ; dinner has been removed from the prettily decorated table, and the early fruits tempt the guests, to the number of twelve or so, who are grouped around it. At the head there sits a gentleman no longer in his first youth, but still strikingly handsome ; there is something artistic about his dress, and there may be a little affectation in his manners, but even this may

in some people be a not unpleasing element. He was our host, William Harrison Ainsworth, and, whatever may have been the claims of others, and in whatever circles they might move, no one was more genial, no one more popular." In later days he made his home at Kemp Town, Brighton.

Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd was a distinguished man of law, who has strayed into fame as the author of the tragedy "Ion," after the first night of which, as has been duly recorded in these pages, there was "a sound of revelry by night" in Russell Square, where the learned judge then resided. There among the guests would be men of letters and men of sciences, lawyers, painters, actors; Macready, one of whose best parts was "Ion," Lord Lytton, Dickens, Albert Smith, full of fun and frivolity, and last but not least, Lady Talfourd, cordial and kind, her charming daughters, her niece, and her son Frank, strikingly handsome and liberally endowed with brains. He was somewhat Bohemian in his habits: "He dined when most people were in bed," says Hollingshead, "and when many were thinking of getting up, and though temperate in his habits as regards drinking, he was intemperate in this particular."

Perhaps some of the Bohemianisms were inherited from his father. The distinguished American jurist and senator, Charles Sumner, notes that Talfourd used to take his negus at the Garrick Club, then in King Street, in the morning on his way to Westminster Hall, and also a night-cap on his way home from Parliament. He dubs him a night-bird, who does not put in an appearance at the club until midnight or thereabouts; and Mrs Lynn Linton says, "I remember how he kept up the tradition of the then past generation, and came into the drawing-

room with a thick speech and unsteady legs." "Those who knew him," says Ballantine, "will never forget his kindly, genial face, the happiness radiating from it when imparting pleasure to others, and his generous hospitality." Edmund Yates greatly enjoyed going to his house, which he describes as genially presided over by the "kindly host, with short-cropped, iron-gray hair and beaming face."

Talfourd was somewhat inordinately fond and proud of his dramatic offspring, as is evidenced by the following:—

Said Dickens to Rogers one day at Broadstairs,

"We shall have Talfourd here to-night."

"Shall we? I am rejoiced to hear it. How did you know he was coming?"

"Because 'Ion' is to be acted at Margate, and he is never absent from any of its representations."

Another claim he has to fame: that to him Jerrold once spoke a pun so appalling bad that it was really inspired, "Well, Talfourd," he asked, "have you any more *Ions* in the fire?"

He died suddenly in 1854, while charging the grand jury in the court-house at Stafford. Albany Fonblanque wrote of his death, "I observe in the announcement of his death that the hour is particularly named. You are aware that he was christened 'Noon' because he was born about that hour, an unusual circumstance. His death took place about the same time, and removed him (I think kindly) before the waning lights of his fame and life."

Dickens wrote after his death, "The chief delight of his life was to give delight to others. His nature was so exquisitely kind, that to be kind was its highest happiness."

V

THE TIMES

IN order to gain a clear view of the period and the persons dealt with in these pages, it is advisable to grasp somewhat of the circumstances in which they lived and the difference between them and those of the present day. Roughly speaking, Dickens and his comrades began life in the dying days of horse traction and of illumination by candles and lamps; before their careers had ended, gas and steam had completely altered the conditions of commerce and society, and electricity, employed in telegraphy, had begun to give promise of the vast revolution which it is working to-day.

It was the age of tinder-boxes, as John Hollingshead puts it in an "illuminating" passage. "The 'midnight oil' was a tallow candle laboriously lighted with a combination of materials that showed the inventive ingenuity of mankind before science came down from its lofty pedestal, and gave up the duty of attending on the gods, to devote itself to the comfort and improvement of the common people—the multitude swinish or not swinish—the very necessary but vulgar tax-payers. . . . The tinder-box was the toy of my childhood. Without it there would have been no light or fire—with it there was (after a time) light and fire, and a certain amount of safety. . . . First of all, the rags had to be got, and burnt into tinder. This tinder was put into a large round tin

box, big enough for a pie-dish. Then a piece of jagged flint had to be got, and a thing called 'a steel,' which might have been the remains of an old horse-shoe, had to be purchased; the flint, struck edge-way on the steel, sent sparks into the tinder which smouldered and prepared itself for the matches. The matches were a formidable bundle of thin strips of wood, diamond-pointed at the ends and dipped in brimstone." To-day tinder-boxes are curiosities in museums and safety matches are four boxes a penny.

Those indeed were, compared with ours, the dark ages; in 1827 gas, of the poorest quality, was only beginning to be used as a street illuminant. The electric light was undreamed of, inconceivable.

Railways were in their infancy, the first that made an appeal to the metropolis being that from London to Greenwich, and the cattle-trucks of our day are superior to the unroofed third-class carriages of that age. The rattle and jingle and the merry tooting horn of the coach were still abroad in the land, echoing and re-echoing through the pages of Dickens's novels and sketches. Ruskin in a famous passage has inveighed against the prose of railway travel as compared with the poetry of older and slower methods, and de Quincey was equally emphatic. "The modern modes of travelling," he writes in "The English Mail-Coach," "cannot compare with the old mail-coach system in grandeur and power. They boast of more velocity, not, however, as a consciousness, but as a fact of our lifeless knowledge, resting upon *alien* evidence; as, for instance, because somebody *says* that we have gone fifty miles in the hour, though we are far from feeling it as a personal experience. . . . The vital experience of the glad animal sensibilities made doubts impossible

on the question of our speed; we heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as thrilling; and this speed was not the product of blind, insensate agencies, that had no sympathy to give, but was incarnated in the fiery eyeballs of the noblest among brutes, in his dilated nostril, spasmodic muscles, and thunder-beating hoofs. . . . But now, on the new system of travelling, iron tubes and boilers have disconnected man's heart from the ministers of his locomotion. . . . Tidings, fitted to convulse all nations, must henceforwards travel by culinary process; and the trumpet that once announced from afar the laurelled mail, heartshaking, when heard screaming on the wind, and proclaiming itself through the darkness to every village or solitary house on its route, has now given way for ever to the pot-wallopings of the boiler." For ever? There are signs of "for ever" coming to an end now, when electricity is invading the territory of King Steam, and motor cars are creating a revolution which may prove as far-reaching as that heralded by the coming of the "boiler."

Turning to a later period, about midway in Dickens's career, we find some curious facts in Peter Cunningham's "Hand-Book of London," in a new and corrected edition, published in 1850. Compare the list of places of amusement in London of the opening twentieth century with that of the mid-nineteenth; then there were the Italian Opera, in the Haymarket, on the site now occupied by His Majesty's Theatre and the Carlton Hotel; Covent-Garden Theatre, Drury-Lane Theatre, the Adelphi, the Lyceum, the St James's, Sadler's Wells, from which the glory shed upon it by Phelps has long since departed, Astley's Amphitheatre — where is that now?—the Princess's, and Exeter Hall Concerts—the

very building has vanished—Vauxhall Gardens and Cremorne.

Cunningham gives what is evidently the fruits of experience with regard to "Hotel and Tavern Dinners"; the Clarendon Hotel in New Bond Street "is much resorted to by persons desirous of entertaining friends in the best style, and to whom expense is no object. Dinners are given sometimes at as high a rate as five guineas a-head." Good turtle is to be had at the Ship and Turtle Tavern in Leadenhall-street, and a moderately priced dinner, "with as good tavern wine as any in London," at Richardson's Hotel, under the Piazza in Covent-Garden, and at the Piazza tavern. For joints, from five o'clock to seven—how greatly hours have altered—the Albion, over against Drury-Lane Theatre, Simpson's in the Strand and the Rainbow in Fleet Street are recommended. "If you can excuse an indifferently clean table-cloth, you may dine well and cheaply at the Cheshire Cheese, in Wine-Office-court, in Fleet Street," and at Verrey's, corner of Hanover-street, Regent Street, "you will get some average French cooking." Nowadays it is difficult to obtain average English cooking anywhere in London. The best buns were to be had of Birch's in Cornhill, whose quaint shop front is still a delightful reminder of past times. Anything approaching the modern palatial restaurant was then unknown; respectable women never dined in public. The chop-house was a famous institution in early-Victorian days, with sanded or sawdusted floor and wooden compartments or boxes. *A la mode* beef was a fairly recent introduction from the "Continent"; and—oh! happy days!—oysters were sixpence a dozen! Cab-fares were eightpence a mile, fourpence for each mile after the first. Dickens was born in 1812, and here follow a few

of the more interesting social items of London history of his earlier years: November 29, 1814, *The Times* first printed by steam power; 1816, first appearance of a steam boat upon the Thames; 1820, cabs introduced; 1822, St James's Park first lighted by gas; October 18, 1826, the last public lottery; 1830, Peter James Bossy was convicted of perjury, and stood in the pillory in the Old Bailey, the last criminal to be so honoured; 1830, omnibuses first introduced by an enterprising Mr Shillibeer, the first running between Paddington and the Bank; February 26, 1836, the first portion of the Greenwich Railway opened; 1838, an experiment made with wood pavement in Oxford Street; January 10, 1840, the Penny Postage came into being; 1845, two steam packets begin running on the Thames. So far the dependable Cunningham.

This is but a brief, even sketchy, indication of some of the changes which have taken place since the day of Dickens's birth, now nearly a century ago, but it will suffice to show in some degree against what background stand the figures of our portrait group. So great has been the change that much of "Pickwick" is now a puzzle to those who have not some acquaintance with the social history of the period in which it was written. The best of all descriptions of the London of Dickens's early manhood are to be found in his own delightful "Sketches by Boz," especially in the "Scenes," to which for further and better information we refer our gentle readers. "Pickwick," too, should be read from this point of view. There are not a few of us who are thankful that we live in a time when drinking is not the favourite amusement of all classes of society, when public executions have been abolished, and when the prize-fighter is not a hero adored of most men and many women.

VI

THE MAN

WHAT tremendously high spirits ran riot in those early-Victorian days! The men seem to have been just jolly grown-up boys, overflowing with animal spirits. There was no morbidity of decadence then! The flowers were always blooming in the spring, save when holly and mistletoe, good will and good cheer, ruled the roast at winter-tide. Charles Dickens was one of the brightest of them all, a splendidly handsome young fellow, a good forehead above a nose with somewhat full nostrils; eyes of quite extraordinary brilliancy, a characteristic to the day of his death; a somewhat prominent, sensitive mouth. Equally true then was what Serjeant Ballantine wrote at a later period: "There was a brightness and geniality about him," says the Serjeant, "that greatly fascinated his companions. His laugh was so cheery, and he seemed so thoroughly to enter into the feelings of those around him. He told a story well and never prosily; he was a capital listener, and in conversation was not in the slightest degree dictatorial."

With all his vivacity and apparent boyishness he was extremely methodical in all his ways.

"No writer ever lived," says an American friend, in a somewhat sweeping way, "whose method was more exact, whose industry was more constant, and whose punctuality was more marked," and his daughter "Mamie" wrote

of him, " There never existed, I think, in all the world, a more thoroughly tidy or methodical creature than was my father. He was tidy in every way—in his mind, in his handsome and graceful person, in his work, in keeping his writing-table drawers, in his large correspondence, in fact in his whole life." He could be a fidget, too, as for example with regard to the furniture of a room in an hotel, at which he might be spending only a single night—rearranging it all, and turning the bed north and south—to meet the views of the electrical currents of the earth !

What astounding vitality he had ; his way of resting a tired brain was to indulge in violent bodily exercise ; " a fifteen-mile ride out," with a friend, " ditto in, and a lunch on the road," topping up with dinner at six o'clock in Doughty Street. He would write to Forster, " you don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up, and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath ? I knows a good 'ous there where we can have a red-hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine," the " 'ous " being the far-famed Jack Straw's Castle.

Of course the success of " Pickwick " brought him into contact with all that was brightest and best in the literary and artistic world of London, and in order to gain some idea of what that meant, let us pay a visit to Gore House and the " most gorgeous Lady Blessington," by whom we trust we shall be as he was —most kindly welcomed.

VII

LADY BLESSINGTON AND HER COURT

LADY BLESSINGTON must indeed have been a queen of hearts even if we credit but a part of all the kind things that have been said of her beauty and wit. It is not incumbent on us to tell her story in full, but rather to indicate the position she held in Dickens's day in London society, and to portray somewhat of the circle of which she was the centre.

Marguerite Power, Countess of Blessington, was born in 1789, and in 1804, under pressure from her father, was forced into an unhappy marriage with Captain Maurice St Leger Farmer, from whom after a few months of misery she separated. In 1818 he died, drunk, and in the same year she married Charles John Gardiner, first Earl of Blessington, and travelled with him on the Continent until his death, returning a widow to London in 1831, accompanied by Count Alfred d'Orsay, who married and separated from Lady Harriet Gardiner, her second husband's daughter and an heiress. What exactly were the relations between Lady Blessington and D'Orsay we need not stop to inquire, but what the world thought of them is amply proved by the cold shoulders turned toward her by other women on this account and because of earlier mysteries in her career. Lord Blessington, who died in 1829, had left her an income of £2500 a year, unfortunately dependent on the value of landed property in Ireland, which later

failed her; also furniture, plate, pictures and so forth. For a time after her arrival in London she lived in her house in St James's Square, which, being too expensive, she let to the Windham Club and moved to Seamore Place, Mayfair, and afterward to Gore House, Kensington. A sister, Mrs Purves, had in 1828 married the Rt. Hon. John Manners Sutton, afterward Lord Canterbury, and another, Mary Anne, a strikingly handsome woman, became the Countess de St Mersault in 1832, she being about thirty and her husband about twice as old. The truth seems to have been that they both believed that they were making a "good match," but, alas, money was not in abundance upon either side. They quarrelled; they separated. Mary Anne's place in her sister's household was supplied by Marguerite and Ellen Power, the charming daughters of Lady Blessington's brother.

It seems almost as if the language of judicious laudation failed those who sang the praises of "the most gorgeous Lady Blessington." P. G. Patmore, in his very dull book, says of her: "There was an *abandon* about her,—partly attributed to temperament, partly to her birth and country, and partly, no doubt, to her consciousness of great personal beauty,—which in any woman less happily constituted, would have degenerated into something bordering on vulgarity. But in her it was so tempered by sweetness of disposition, and so kept in check by an exquisite social tact, as well as by natural good breeding as contradistinguished from artificial—in other words, a real sympathy, not an affected one, with the feelings of others—that it formed the chief charm and attraction of her character and bearing." But lest it may be thought that these are the ramblings of a mere man, we quote the description of her given by Mrs Cowden Clarke:—"fair,

florid-complexioned, with sparkling eyes and white, high forehead, above which her bright brown hair was smoothly braided beneath a light and simple blonde cap, in which were a few touches of sky-blue satin ribbon that singularly well became her, setting off her buxom face and its vivid colouring."

She dressed brilliantly, but at the same time with an admirable skill that set off her charms to the very best advantage, as well as also softening that tendency to exuberance which was the only defect in a well-nigh perfect figure. Thus gifted with beauty, with wit, with the supreme gift of charm, is it any wonder that we find Haydon writing in 1835 that " everybody goes to Lady Blessington. She has the first news of every thing, and everybody seems delighted to tell her." Wits, dandies, poets, politicians, scholars, men of letters—all gathered together in her hospitable salon, but women kept carefully away, save her own relations, and Lady Charlotte Bury, Byron's Countess Guiccioli and one or two others. In her circle were the following—a few picked out from many, her friends and her admirers, Walter Savage Landor, whom we find visiting at Seamore Place in 1832, the old and the young Disraeli, Barry Cornwall, Dickens, Bulwer (Lord Lytton), Macready, Captain Marryat—a bluff, breezy-mannered seaman; he was tall, broad in the shoulders and thickset, and Henry Vizetelly, in opposition somewhat to others, says, " There was nothing of the jovial ' salt ' about him ; none of that flow of animal spirits which his writings might have led one to expect, nor aught that could be termed genial even; his style," he adds, " was rather that of the 'quarter-deck' ; "—Albany Fonblanque, Maclise, John Forster, who met Lady Blessington first in 1836, Trelawney—the " Younger Son "—Lord Canter-

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.
From the Painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.

bury and plenty more, some of whom we shall take care to meet—and, always, Count d'Orsay, the prince of the dandies. The well-dressed man-about-town of those days did not consider it a necessary part of his equipment as a dandy to be or pretend to be devoid of brains or of any interest in the serious affairs of life. He set up to be—and usually was—a wit and a cultivated, accomplished gentleman. Among the most famous, always *after* D'Orsay, were Dickens himself, Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli and Harrison Ainsworth, a goodly company the like of which has not been seen before nor since.

Alfred Guillaume Gabriel, Count d'Orsay, was born in 1801, of a noble French family, served in the bodyguard of the Bourbons, and has been immortalised by Byron as a model of the French gentleman of the *ancien régime*. He came to England, as we have noted, with Lady Blessington in 1831, and actually separated from his wife in 1834, doing so legally some six years later, resigning his interest in the Blessington property in consideration of a large annuity and a sum of £55,000. But such sums were trifles in the ocean of his expenditure. He counted tradesmen as convenient persons whose reason for existence was to give credit to such magnificent customers as himself, which up to a point they found it profitable to do, for his patronage made them famous.

Charles James Mathews, who had travelled with him and the Blessingtons in Italy, gives this description of D'Orsay when a youth of nineteen: "he was the model of all that could be conceived of noble demeanour and youthful candour; handsome beyond all question; accomplished to the last degree; highly educated, and of great literary acquirements; with a gaiety of heart and cheerfulness of mind that spread happiness on all around him.

His conversation was brilliant and engaging, as well as clever and instructive," and the somewhat ponderous Patmore waxes positively enthusiastic over him; "he was one of the very best riders in a country whose riders are admitted to be the best in the world . . . he was the best judge of a horse among a people of horse-dealers and horse-jockeys," a fine cricketer, swimmer, boxer, swordsman, wrestler and tennis player; "he was incomparably the handsomest man of his time . . . uniting to a figure scarcely inferior in the perfection of its form to that of the Apollo, a head and face that blended the grace and dignity of the Antinous with the beaming intellect of the younger Bacchus, and the almost feminine softness and beauty of the Ganymede." Prodigious!

He was skilled in all the accomplishments that become a man of the world, and an artist of considerable ability; above all, the best dressed man in town. Edmund Yates describes him driving in the Park "always in faultless white kid gloves, with his shirt wristbands turned back over his coat-cuffs, and his whole 'turn-out' . . . perfection." His wit, says Chorley, "was more quaint than anything I have heard from Frenchmen (there are touches of like quality in Rabelais)—more airy than the brightest London wit of my time, those of Sydney Smith and Mr Fonblanque not excepted." He was not only all-conquering with the fair sex, to whom he always acted with deferential courteousness, but also with men, whom his capital conversation always delighted. He even conquered Carlyle!

In the spring of 1839 D'Orsay went to see him at Cheyne Row, and the sage's description of the visit is amusing:—"About a fortnight ago, this Phœbus Apollo

of dandyism, escorted by poor little Chorley, came whirling hither in a chariot that struck all Chelsea into mute amazement with its splendour. Chorley's under jaw went like the hopper or under riddle of a pair of fanners, such was his terror on bringing such a splendour into actual contact with such a grimness. Nevertheless, we did amazingly well, the Count and I. He is a tall fellow of six feet three, built like a tower, with floods of dark auburn hair, with a beauty, with an adornment unsurpassable on this planet; withal a rather substantial fellow at bottom, by no means without insight, without fun, and a sort of rough sarcasm rather striking out of such a porcelain figure. He said, looking at Shelley's bust, in his French accent, 'Ah, it is one of those faces who weesh to swallow their chin.' . . . Jane laughed for two days at the contrast of my plaid dressing-gown, bilious, iron countenance, and this Paphian apparition."

Another curious conjunction of stars of different magnitudes was this: "Count d'Orsay is a friend of mine, co-godfather to Dickens's child with me," writes Tennyson in 1852.

The somewhat egregious Nathaniel Parker Willis, a New York man of letters and journalist, who was florid both in his style and in his costume, visited Lady Blessington at Seamore Place, and has left us the following "Pencilling by the Way." That Willis was not a little florid in his literary style as well as in his dress is shown by this description of Lady Blessington:—"In the long library, lined alternately with splendidly-bound books and mirrors, and with a deep window of the breadth of the room, opening upon Hyde Park, I found Lady B—— alone. The picture to my eye as the door opened was a very lovely one:—a woman of remarkable beauty half buried

in a *fauteuil* of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp suspended from the centre of the arched ceiling; sofas, couches, ottomans, and busts arranged in rather a crowded sumptuousness through the room; enamel tables, covered with expensive and elegant trifles in every corner; and a delicate white hand relieved on the back of a book, to which the eye was attracted by the blaze of diamond rings."

Willis was introduced to Lady Blessington by Landor, by letter, in the year 1834:—" an American gentleman attached to the legation at Paris " and " the best poet the New World has produced in any part of it," with which criticism we cannot find it in our heart to agree, for he was no poet at all but a mere maker of verses. Willis was then twenty-seven years of age, a "smart" man, editor and proprietor of *The New York Mirror*; tall, with a good figure, bright-complexioned, slightly reddish-hued hair and large, light-blue eyes; a self-conscious dandy, and self-complacent also. Scarcely a man worth quarrelling with, save that he took advantage of his kindly welcome in London society to pen a series of portraits which contained a considerable amount of truth leavened with too great an amount of cheap disparagement of men and women far superior to himself.

In 1836 Lady Blessington moved from Seamore Place to Kensington Gore, which she describes to Landor as having " taken up her residence in the country, being a mile from London " ! Gore House, the site of which is now occupied by the Royal Albert Hall, was a low, unpretentious building, painted white, standing close down to the roadside, with a fine garden behind. Wilberforce, who emancipated, as his beautiful successor made, slaves, once occupied it, and writes, " We are just one

mile from the turnpike at Hyde Park Corner, having about three acres of pleasure-ground around our house, or rather behind it, and several old trees, walnut and mulberry, of thick foliage. I can sit and read under their shade with as much admiration of the beauties of Nature as if I were down in Yorkshire, or anywhere else 200 miles from the great city."

As some indication of the luxury of Lady Blessington's surroundings, already hinted at by Willis, we quote this from the catalogue of the sale, to which we shall refer later on :—" Costly and elegant effects ; comprising all the magnificent furniture, rare porcelain, sculpture in marble, bronzes, and an assemblage of objects of art and decoration ; a casket of valuable jewellery and *bijouteries*, services of rich chased silver and silver-gilt plate, a superbly fitted silver dressing-case ; collection of ancient and modern pictures, including many portraits of distinguished persons, valuable original drawings, and fine engravings, framed and in portfolios ; the extensive and interesting library of books, comprising upwards of 5000 volumes, expensive table services of china and rich cut glass, and an infinity of useful and valuable articles. All the property of the Right Hon. the Countess of Blessington, retiring to the Continent."

Dickens made her acquaintance somewhere about the year 1841, soon becoming one of her closest and most appreciative friends, among whom was also William Makepeace Thackeray.

We find Landor visiting her again in 1837 ; at her house he was always welcome, and there spent many of his happiest hours in London. " I shall be at Gore House on Monday," he writes to Forster, " pray come in the evening. I told Lady Blessington I should not let any

of her court stand at all in my way. When I am tired of them, I leave them." Landor describes "Disraeli sitting silently watching their conversation as if it were a display of fireworks." Can this be true? If true, probably the young novelist was taking stock for future use.

Among those whom Dickens met there was Landor, at a dinner at that most delightful house. The latter's attire had become slightly disordered, to which D'Orsay laughingly drew attention as they rose from the table. Flushing up, Landor said, "My dear Count d'Orsay, I thank you! My dear Count d'Orsay, I thank you from my soul for pointing out to me the abominable condition to which I am reduced! If I had entered the drawing-room, and presented myself before Lady Blessington in so absurd a light, I would have instantly gone home, put a pistol to my head, and blown my brains out!" Those were the great days of the great dandies!

Chorley, the well-known musical critic, from whom we have already quoted, who was introduced to Lady Blessington by N. P. Willis, admired her, as everyone seems to have done who knew her; she had "the keenness of an Irishwoman in relishing fun and repartee, strange turns of language, and bright touches of character. . . . Her taste in everything was towards the gay, the superb, the luxurious." He describes a dinner there on May 8th, 1838:—"Yesterday evening, I had a very rare treat—a dinner at Kensington *tête-a-tête* with Lady Blessington and Mr Landor; she talking her best, brilliant and kindly, and without that touch of self-consciousness which she sometimes displays when worked up to it by flatterers and gay companions. Landor, as usual, the very finest man's head I have ever seen, and with all his Johnsonian disposition to tyrannise and lay down the

law in his talk, restrained and refined by an old-world courtesy and deference towards his bright hostess, for which *chivalry* is the only right word."

As evanescent as the enchantments of the actor's art are those of the wit and the beauty, and we can but faintly picture from descriptions by eye- and ear-witnesses the delights of the winter and summer nights' entertainments at Gore House.

William Archer Shee gives a bright description :— " Gore House last night was unusually brilliant. Lady Blessington has the art of collecting around her all that is best worth knowing in the *male* society of London. There were Cabinet Ministers, diplomats, poets, painters, and politicians, all assembled together. . . . She has the peculiar and most unusual talent of keeping the conversation in a numerous circle *general*, and of preventing her guests from dividing into little selfish *pelotons*. With a tact unsurpassed, she contrives to draw out even the most modest tyro from his shell of reserve, and, by appearing to take an interest in his opinion, gives him the courage to express it. All her visitors seem, by some hidden influence, to find their level, yet they leave her house satisfied with themselves."

Which is fully borne out by—among much other evidence —what Patmore has recorded of the brilliant hostess :— " As a talker she was a better sort of De Stael—as acute, as copious, as offhand, as original, and almost as sparkling, but without a touch of her arrogance, exigence, or pedantry ; and with a faculty for listening that is the happiest and most indispensable of all the talents that go to constitute a good talker."

George Augustus Sala describes being taken as a small boy by his mother to Gore House, when among others

present were Maclise and Harrison Ainsworth, then a young man of about thirty, strikingly handsome, a dandy of the oiled, curled, be-whiskered D'Orsay type. The story is told of the beautiful Blessington standing one time between the two dandies, declaring that she was supported by the two handsomest men in town.

Macready gives a brief glimpse of Lady Blessington in 1837: "reached Lady Blessington's about a quarter before eight. Found there Fonblanque, Bulwer, Trelawney, Procter, Auldjo, Forster, Lord Canterbury, Fred Reynolds, and Mr and Mrs Fairlie, Kenney, a young Manners Sutton, Count d'Orsay and some unknown. I passed an agreeable day, and a long and interesting conversation in the drawing-room (what an elegant and splendid room it is !) with D'Orsay on pictures."

As a little powder among all this jam, we note that Edmund Yates recalls Lady Blessington as "a fair, fat, middle-aged woman, in a big heavy swinging chariot glistening—the chariot, not her ladyship—with varnish, and profusely emblazoned with heraldry, and with two enormous footmen, cane-carrying, powder-headed and silk-stockinged, hanging on behind. One of the Misses Power, her nieces, and remarkably pretty girls, generally accompanied her ladyship."

Among D'Orsay's paintings was a large picture of the garden of Gore House, with portraits of Lady Blessington, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Douro, Lord Brougham, Sir Edwin Landseer, the Misses Power and others. "In the foreground, to the right, are the great Duke and Lady Blessington ; in the centre, Sir E. Landseer, seated, in the act of sketching a fine cow, with a calf by her side ; Count d'Orsay himself with two favourite dogs, is seen on the right of the group, and Lord Chesterfield on the left ;

nearer the house are the two Misses Power (nieces of Lady Blessington), reading a letter, a gentleman walking behind. Further to the left are Lord Brougham, Lord Douro, etc., seated under a tree, engaged in conversation."

Of the many good stories told at Gore House we can find room only for this, told there one night *à propos* of Theodore Hook's righteously losing his temper when overpressed by a vulgar hostess to " perform."

" Do, Mr Hook, *do* favour us ? "

" Indeed, madam, I can't ; I can't indeed. I am like that little bird, the canary ; can't lay my eggs when any one is looking at me."

About the year 1847 clouds began to lower over the house ; monetary troubles accumulated. We may here relate an incident that occurred one Sunday evening in February, when among others present were Prince Louis Napoleon, Dickens, Bulwer, and Forster. Lady Blessington exhibited a painting of a girl's face, which she had received from her brother Robert, who held a Government berth at Hobart ; it was a portrait done by the hand of the murderer and forger, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright.

In March, 1849, the crash came ; the bailiffs entered Gore House, and the glory thereof departed for ever.

" I have just come away," writes Thackeray, " from a dismal sight : Gore House full of snobs looking at the furniture. Foul Jews ; odious bombazine women, who drove up in mysterious flys which they had hired—the wretches, . . . so as to come in state to a fashionable lounge ; brutes keeping their hats on in the kind old drawing-room—I longed to knock some of them off, and say, ' Sir, be civil in a lady's room. . . .' There was one of the servants there, not a powdered one, but

a butler. . . . My heart melted towards him, and I gave him a pound. Ah! it was a strange, sad picture of 'Vanity Fair.' My mind is all boiling up with it."

Lady Blessington and D'Orsay fled to Paris. Her "goods and chattels" sold for sufficient to pay her debts. She and her nieces took an *appartement* in the *Rue du Cerq*, hard by the Champs Elysées. In the June of 1849, still an exile, she died peacefully in her sleep. When he heard the news of her death, Landor wrote to Forster, "Yet why call it sad? It was the very mode of departure she anticipated and desired."

In July, 1856, Dickens wrote to Landor, from Boulogne: "There in Paris . . . I found Marguerite Power and little Nelly, living with their mother and a pretty sister, in a very small, neat apartment, and working (as Marguerite told me) hard for a living. All that I saw of them filled me with respect, and revived the tenderest remembrances of Gore House. They are coming to pass two or three weeks here for a country rest, next month. We had many long talks concerning Gore House, and all its bright associations; and I can honestly report that they had no one in more gentle and affectionate remembrance than you. Marguerite is still handsome. . . ."

D'Orsay dined with Dickens in Paris in 1850, and in the same year Thackeray called on him there: "To-day I went to see D'Orsay, who has made a bust of Lamartine, who, too, is mad with vanity. . . . D'Orsay has fitted himself up a charming *atélier* with arms and trophies, pictures and looking-glasses, the tomb of Blessington, the sword and star of Napoleon, and a crucifix over his bed, and here he dwells without any doubts or remorses, admiring himself in the most horrible pictures which he has painted, and the statues which he gets done for him."

CHARLES DICKENS.

From the Drawing by Count D'Orsay.

Napoleon, with whom he had been very friendly in his days of exile in London, and who was a familiar and mysterious figure at Gore House, seems to have neglected D'Orsay somewhat in the days of his downfall, but in the year of his death, 1852, appointed him Director of the Fine Arts, a post more lordly in name than in emolument.

D'Orsay had gained a firm place in the hearts of many men whose esteem it was not easy to win or retain. Landor writes on August 7, 1852, " the death of poor, dear D'Orsay fell heavily tho' not unexpectedly upon me. Intelligence of his painful and hopeless malady reached me some weeks before the event. With many foibles and grave faults he was generous and sincere. Neither spirits nor wit ever failed him, and he was ready at all times to lay down his life for a friend." Macready, also, was deeply touched by his death : " To my deep grief perceived the notice of the death of dear Count d'Orsay. No one who knew him and had affections could help loving him. When he liked he was most fascinating and captivating. It was impossible to be insensible to his graceful, frank, and most affectionate manner. . . . He was the most brilliant, graceful, endearing man I ever saw—humorous, witty, and clear-headed."

With some of those in this brilliant circle, who were numbered among Dickens's friends, we meet again.

VIII

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

OF those of the Blessington's intimate friends who were not dandies, but were men of letters, perhaps Walter Savage Landor was the most striking figure. He was born in 1775, and lived on, a chequered life of robust joys and robust miseries, until 1864. What historic days he saw! What a brave connecting link he was for Dickens between the days present and past. Of him as a literary man it is not necessary to say anything here, we need only come into contact with him as a striking and lovable personality. One touch of his younger days we may give: "At Oxford," he says, "I was about the first student who wore his hair without powder. 'Take care,' said my tutor; 'they will stone you for a republican.'" Yet strangely enough he disliked, despised the French as a people. For he was brusque and sweeping in his wholesale judgments, as for example once exclaiming to Macready, "Sir, the French are all scoundrels," which has quite a Johnsonian smack about it. Then, writing from Paris in 1802, he says, "Doubtless the government of Bonaparte is the best that can be contrived for Frenchmen. Monkeys must be chained, though it may cost them some grimaces."

Forster first met Landor in the summer of 1836, when these two with Wordsworth and Crabb Robinson occupied a box at the first night of "Ion." Afterward they adjourned

to Talfourd's house, where, as related elsewhere in these pages, a fine company was gathered together. We gain a clear view of him, some two years later, from an American visitor, Charles Sumner, who described him in 1838 as "dressed in a heavy frock-coat of snuff colour, trousers of the same colour, and boots . . . with an open countenance, firm and decided, and a head gray and inclining to baldness . . . conversation . . . not varied, but it was animated and energetic in the extreme. We crossed each other several times; he called Napoleon the weakest, littlest man in history . . . he considers Shakspeare and Washington the *two* greatest men that ever lived, and Cromwell one of the greatest sovereigns."

"I recall the well-remembered figure and face," writes Forster in 1869, "as they first became known to me nearly thirty years ago. Landor was then upwards of sixty, and looked that age to the full. He was not above the middle stature, but had a stout stalwart presence, walked without a stoop, and in his general aspect, particularly the set and carriage of his head, was decidedly of what is called a distinguished bearing. His hair was already silvered gray, and had retired far upward from his forehead, which, wide and full but retreating, could never in the earlier time have been seen to such advantage. What at first was noticeable, however, in the broad white massive head, were the full yet strangely-lifted eyebrows. . . . In the large, grey eyes there was a depth of composed expression that even startled by its contrast to the eager restlessness looking out from the surface of them; and in the same variety and quickness of transition the mouth was extremely striking. The lips that seemed compressed with unalterable will would in a moment relax to a softness more than feminine; and a sweeter smile it

was impossible to conceive. . . . A loud long laugh hardly less than leonine. Higher and higher went peal after peal, in continuous and increasing volleys. . . ."

He could snore to admiration, also, for we have Dickens writing to him from Paris in 1846, familiarly addressing him as "Young Man":—"that steady snore of yours, which I once heard piercing the door of your bedroom . . . reverberating along the bell-wire in the hall, so getting outside into the street, playing Eolian harps among the area railings, and going down the New Road like the blast of a trumpet."

It is chiefly with his life at Bath that we will deal, where Dickens, Mrs Dickens, Maclise and Forster visited him on February 7th, 1840, at 36 St James's Square. "Landor's ghost goes along the silent streets here before me," Dickens wrote in the year before his death. It was during this visit, writes Forster, that there came into the novelist's mind the first stirrings of imagination that eventually took form as Little Nell, who became to Landor as one who had really lived and died.

Of his habit of life he himself gives us a description, writing to his sister in 1845: "I walk out in all weathers six miles a day at least; and I generally, unless I am engaged in the evening, read from seven till twelve or one. I sleep twenty minutes after dinner, and nearly four hours at night, or rather in the morning. I rise at nine, breakfast at ten, and dine at five. All the winter I have some beautiful sweet daphnes and hyacinths in my window." He used some quaint, old-fashioned pronunciations, such as "woonderful," "goolden," "woorld," "srimp," "yaller," and "laylock."

A love of his old age was Pomero, his small, white Pomeranian; he "is sitting in a state of contemplation,"

Landor writes playfully, " with his nose before the fire. He twinkles his ears and his feathery tail. . . . Last evening I took him to hear Luisina de Sodre play and sing. . . . Pomero was deeply affected, and lay close to the pedal on her gown, singing in a great variety of tones, not always in time. It is unfortunate that he always *will* take a part where there is music, for he sings even worse than I do."

" When he laughed and Pomero barked," says Mrs Lynn Linton, " and Pomero always barked whenever he laughed—it was Bedlam in that small room in beautiful Bath."

But even dear Pomero came occasionally under the lash of his master's tongue, or shall we say bark, which was so seldom accompanied by a bite, and Landor would burst out, " Be quiet, you nasty, noisy, troublesome beast! I'll wring your neck, if you won't be quiet! "

Mrs Lynn Linton describes in *Fraser's Magazine* her first meeting with Landor, in 1847, he then over seventy, she nearly fifty years younger. She was with friends, Doctor Brabant and his sister, in Empson's curiosity shop at Bath, " when we saw what seemed a noble-looking old man, badly dressed in shabby snuff-coloured clothes, a dirty old blue necktie, unstarched cotton shirt—and ' knubbly ' apple-pie boots. But underneath the rusty old hatbrim gleamed a pair of quiet and penetrating grey-blue eyes ; the voice was sweet and masterly ; the manner that of a man of rare distinction." It was Landor, one of the gods of her idolatry ; she goes on, " I remember how the blood came into my face as I dashed up to him with both hands held out, and said, ' Mr Landor ? oh ! is this Mr Landor ? ' as if he had been a god suddenly revealed. And I remember the amused smile with which

he took both my hands in his, and said, ' And who is this little girl, I wonder ? ' From that hour we were friends ; and I thank God I can say truthfully, that never for one hour, one moment, afterwards were we anything else. For twelve long, dear years, we were father and daughter. We never called each other anything else." Elsewhere she gives a very amusing picture of him :—" He was always losing and overlooking, and then the tumult that would arise was something too absurd, considering the occasion. He used to stick a letter into a book : then, when he wanted to answer it, it was gone—and someone had taken it—the only letter he wanted to answer—that he would rather have forfeited a thousand pounds than have lost, and so on. Or he used to push his spectacles up over his forehead, and then declare they were lost, lost for ever. He would ramp and rave about the room at such times as these, upsetting everything that came in his way, declaring that he was the most unfortunate man in the world, or the greatest fool, or the most inhumanly persecuted. I would persuade him to sit down and let me look for the lost property ; when he would sigh in deep despair ; and say there was no use in taking any more trouble about it, it was gone for ever. When I found it, as of course I always did, he would say ' thank you ' as quietly and naturally as if he had not been raving like a maniac half a minute before."

Carlyle was with Landor in 1850. " Landor was in his house," he writes, " in a fine quiet street like a New Town Edinburgh one, waiting for me, attended only by a nice Bologna dog. Dinner not far from ready ; his apartments all hung round with queer old Italian pictures ; the very doors had pictures on them. Dinner was elaborately simple. The brave Landor forced me to talk far too much,

and we did very near a bottle of claret, besides two glasses of sherry; far too much liquor and excitement for a poor fellow like me. However, he was really stirring company: a proud, irascible, trenchant, yet generous, veracious, and very dignified old man; quite a ducal or royal man in the temper of him. . . . He left me to go smoking along the streets about ten at night, he himself retiring then. . . . . Bath is decidedly the prettiest town in all England."

Malmsey Madeira was a famous, favourite drink of his, a pleasant wine when in proper condition. Landor talked little while he ate, but burst forth between the courses, and of his wine he would swear that it was such that the Ancient Greeks had drunk withal, and that it must have been the favourite tipple of Epicurus and Anacreon, and Pericles and Aspasia.

Dickens, writing of Landor's appearance, gives a curious account:—"The arms were very peculiar. They were rather short, and were curiously restrained and checked in their action at the elbows; in the action of the hands, even when separately clenched, there was the same kind of pause, and a notable tendency to relaxation on the part of the thumb. Let the face be never so intense or fierce, there was a commentary of gentleness in the hands essential to be taken along with it. Like Hamlet, Landor would speak daggers but use none. In the expression of his hands, though angrily closed, there was always gentleness and tenderness; just as when they were open, and the handsome old gentleman would wave them with a little courtly flourish that sat well upon him, as he recalled some classic compliment that he had rendered to some reigning beauty, there was a chivalrous grace about them such as pervades his softer verses."

Carlyle dubbed him "the unsubduable Roman."

"Once, when I was staying with him," Mrs Lynn Linton writes, "he had a small dinner-party, of Dickens, John Forster, and myself. This was my first introduction to both these men. I found Dickens charming, and Forster pompous, heavy, and ungenial. Dickens was bright and gay and winsome, and while treating Mr Landor with the respect of a younger man for an elder, allowed his wit to play about him, bright and harmless as summer lightning . . . but Forster was saturnine and cynical." Mrs Lynn Linton is righteously indignant at Forster's "carping and unsympathetic" life of Landor, one of the worst books that ever he wrote.

The occasion of this festivity was his seventy-fifth birthday, and after it he wrote those splendid lines :—

> "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife ;
> Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art ;
> I warm'd both hands before the fire of life ;
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

IX

MOVING ON

ALTHOUGH it is not in any way the purpose of this book to re-tell the life of Charles Dickens, it is time we returned to the centre of the circle. In 1838 he rented a cottage at Twickenham, not then the suburb of London which it has since become, where he entertained himself and his friends, and where there were high jinks, as there were apt to be wherever he was present or presided. Among the visitors were Talfourd, Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold, Maclise, Ainsworth, George Cattermole, who Forster says "had then enough and to spare of fun as well as fancy to supply ordinary artists and humourists by the dozen, and wanted only a little more ballast and steadiness to possess all that could give attraction to good fellowship." Dear! Dear! If only he had been as steady and dull as Forster! Cattermole, who it will be remembered drew many illustrations for Dickens, married a distant relation of the novelist, Miss Elderton, in 1839, and the "happy couple" passed their honeymoon near Petersham, where Dickens was staying at the time. He was born in 1800 and died in 1868.

Toward the end of the year 1839 Dickens moved from Doughty Street to 1 Devonshire Terrace, a bigger house with a large garden, hard by the York Gate of Regent's Park, a house afterward occupied by George du Maurier. Of his method of work, writes one who knew him while

living there :—" His hours and days were spent by rule. He rose at a certain time, he retired at another, and though no precisian, it was not often that his arrangements varied. His hours for writing were between breakfast and luncheon, and when there was any work to be done no temptation was sufficiently strong to cause it to be neglected. This order and regularity followed him through the day. His mind was essentially methodical, and in his long walks, in his recreations, in his labour, he was governed by rules laid down for himself, rules well studied beforehand and rarely departed from. The so-called men of business—the people whose own exclusive devotion to the science of profit and loss makes them regard doubtfully all to whom that same science is not the main object in life—would have been delighted and amazed at this side of Dickens's character."

X

THREE JESTERS

SAMUEL ROGERS was a rich banker, a poor poet, a wicked wit and a delightful entertainer, amongst his multitudinous guests and friends being Charles Dickens. He was born in 1763 and lived on to unusual old age, dying in 1855. His father was a banker in Cornhill, so that he was wealthy, writing poetry for pleasure and with considerable pains. He was indeed an extremely slow worker, which gave rise to the following quaint conceit of Sydney Smith, who having told a friend that Rogers was not very well, was asked what was wrong with him. "Oh, don't you know," said Sydney Smith, "he has produced a couplet. When our friend is delivered of a couplet, with infinite labour and pains, he takes to his bed, has straw laid down, the knocker tied up, and expects his friends to call and make inquiries, and the answer at the door invariably is, 'Mr Rogers and his little couplet are as well as can be expected.'"

The said Sydney Smith is reported as having gotten himself into trouble with Rogers by recommending him when he sat for his portrait to take the pose of "saying his prayers with his face in his hat." There is another version of this tale, but we like better the above.

To breakfast with the banker-poet in his charming house, 22 St James's Place, St James's Street, overlooking the Green Park, must have been truly delightful, and few

there were who would not receive an invitation with pleasure and accept it with alacrity.

Rogers wrote to Lady Dufferin, "Will you breakfast with me to-morrow? S. R." The reply was "Won't I? H. D."

There were usually not more than four or five guests, and for many years there were gathered round the hospitable table the leading lights in literature, art, science, politics, and any distinguished strangers staying in or passing through town. Various are the portraits painted of the poet, varying according to the temperaments of the painters, but it is evident that he was an accomplished entertainer, an admirable teller of tales, a wit, a punster, and a master of the art of conversation; caustic and cynical at times, and also an inspirer of wit and talk.

"At least, Mr Rogers, you will admit that there was fire in Byron?" said a guest.

"Oh, yes!" he answered, "and plenty of it, but it was hell fire."

Charles Mackay, who narrates this, gave Rogers a very good character, "he said unkind things, but he did kind ones in a most gracious manner. If he was sometimes severe upon those who were 'up,' he always was tender to those who were 'down.' He never closed his purse-strings against a friend, or refused to help the young and deserving."

Tom Moore notes that on March 23, 1843:—"Breakfasted at Rogers's to meet Jeffrey and Lord John—two of the men I like best among my numerous friends. Jeffrey's volubility (which was always superabundant) becomes even more copious, I think, as he grows older. But I am ashamed of myself for finding any fault with him."

At his dinners he had candles set high round the room so that the pictures might be seen to advantage. When asked what he thought of this arrangement, Sydney Smith replied that he did not like it—" above, a blaze of light, below, darkness and gnashing of teeth."

Macaulay writes, " What a delightful house it is ! It looks out on the Green Park just at the most pleasant point. The furniture has been selected with a delicacy of taste quite unique. Its value does not depend on fashion, but must be the same while the fine arts are held in any esteem. In the drawing-room, for example, the chimney-pieces are carved by Flaxman into the most beautiful Grecian forms. The bookcase is painted by Stothard, in his very best manner, with groups from Chaucer, Shakspere, and Boccaccio. The pictures are not numerous, but every one is excellent. The most remarkable object in the dining-room is, I think, a cast of Pope, taken after death by Roubilliac, a noble model in terra-cotta by Michael Angelo, from which he afterwards made one of his finest statues, that of Lorenzo de Medici ; and, lastly, a mahogany table on which stands an antique vase. When Chantrey dined with Rogers some time ago he took particular notice of the vase, and the table on which it stands, and asked Rogers who made the table. ' A common carpenter,' said Rogers. ' Do you remember the making of it ? ' said Chantrey. ' Certainly,' said Rogers, in some surprise, ' I was in the room while it was finished with the chisel, and gave the workman directions about placing it.' ' Yes,' said Chantrey, ' I was the carpenter. I remember the room well, and all the circumstances.' "

Of May 24, 1840, Macready notes, " Talfourd and Dickens called for me, and we went together to Rogers's.

where we dined. . . . I was pleased with the day, liking Mrs Norton very much, and being much amused with some anecdotes of Rogers's. His collection of pictures is admirable, and the spirit of good taste seems to pervade every nook of his house."

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah was one of the three beautiful daughters of Thomas Sheridan and grand-daughter of Richard Brinsley, and is best known in history as Mrs Norton, having married the Hon. George Chapple Norton in 1827. Later she became Lady Stirling-Maxwell. Her elder sister was Lady Dufferin and her younger the Duchess of Somerset, who was Queen of Beauty at the celebrated Eglinton Tournament. Serjeant Ballantine paints her as one of the most lovely women of her time, clever, too, and accomplished. Of her beauty Charles Sumner gives an enthusiastic account in 1839; her loveliness "has never been exaggerated. It is brilliant and refined. Her countenance is lighted by eyes of the intensest brightness, and her features are of the greatest regularity. There is something tropical in her look; it is so intensely bright and burning, with large dark eyes, dark hair, and Italian complexion. And her conversation is so pleasant and powerful without being masculine, or rather it is masculine without being mannish; there is the grace and ease of the woman with a strength and skill of which any man might well be proud. Mrs Norton is about twenty-eight years old, and is, I believe, a grossly slandered woman." She was dark-haired, with dark eyes, a classic forehead and delicate features, so others tell us. It is pleasant to find this unanimity, for there does not seem to be any matter upon which the observations of eye-witnesses differ so greatly as upon this of a woman's or a man's appearance. All that we, who have

not seen, can do is to strike an average when the evidence is contradictory, with a result more or less unsatisfactory.

Mrs Norton did not live happily with her husband, separating from him in 1836, and he foolishly and without due cause afterward brought an action for divorce against her, coupling her name with that of Lord Melbourne. Rogers stood staunchly by her in her trouble and accompanied her into court on the first day of the trial.

A false accusation has often been levelled against Mrs Norton that in 1852 she conveyed to Delane, the famous editor of *The Times*, the news that "the heads of the Government had agreed" upon "repeal," the publication of which decision created dismay and amazement. It was said that she had fascinated Sidney Herbert into giving away the secret to her, and it has even been stated that she sold the information for £500 to Barnes, Delane's predecessor, who had then been dead some four years! Delane had other and more trustworthy sources of obtaining "inside information" as to the views and doings of the Government. She is, more or less, the heroine of Mr George Meredith's "Diana of the Crossways," in which the above-mentioned mythical incident in her life is utilised.

To return to our Rogers.

On November 25, 1840, Carlyle dined with Rogers, Milman, "Pickwick" and others:—"A dull evening, not worth awakening for at four in the morning, with the dance of all the devils round you. . . . Rogers is still brisk, courteous, kindly-affectioned—a good old man, pathetic to look upon." Some years later he was with him at the Ashburtons', and notes:—"I do not remember any old man (he is now eighty-three) whose manner of living gave me less satisfaction. A most sorrowful,

distressing, distracted old phenomenon, hovering over the rim of deep eternities with nothing but light babble, fatuity, vanity, and the frostiest London wit in his mouth. Sometimes I felt as if I could throttle him, the poor old wretch ! "

He used to tell this tale—" An Englishman and a Frenchman had to fight a duel. That they might have the better chance of missing one another, they were to fight in a dark room. The Englishman fired up the chimney, and, by Jove ! he brought down the Frenchman ! When I tell this story in Paris—I put the Englishman up the chimney ! "

Apparently he was like Douglas Jerrold in being bitter of wit but not at heart : " When I was young," he said of himself, " I used to say good-natured things, and nobody listened to me. Now I am old I say ill-natured things and everybody listens to me." " Often bitter, but very kindly at heart," writes Tennyson. " We have often talked of death together till I have seen the tears roll down his cheeks."

" He says the most ill-natured things, and does the best," says Sumner.

Of his readiness the following is a happy example : A man, whom Rogers did not know, stopped him one day in Piccadilly.

" How do you do, Mr Rogers ? You don't remember me, sir. I had the pleasure of seeing you at Bath."

" Delighted to see you again — at Bath," was the response.

Washington Irving, writing from Brighton to Moore, August 14, 1824, says of Rogers, " I dined *tête-a-tête* with him some time since, and he served up his friends as he served up his fish, with a squeeze of lemon over each.

It was very piquante, but it rather set my teeth on edge." He does not mention the fact, however, that Moore himself was one of the friends so served up!

Of his friendship with Dickens we have considerable record, but the following must suffice. In Forster we find a comical account of a dinner given by Dickens in April, 1849, when both Rogers and Jules Benedict were taken suddenly but not seriously ill. The host had been dispatiating upon an atrocious pauper-farming case, and was now roundly chaffed as being nearly as iniquitous and a poisoner of his confiding guests. When Forster was helping Rogers on with his over-shoes, for his customary walk home, the poet said, "Do you know how many waistcoats I wear? Five! Here they are!" Wherewith he displayed them.

From Albaro, Dickens writes on the 1st of September, 1844, to Rogers :—"I wish you would come and pluck an orange from the tree at Christmas time. You should walk on the terrace as early in the morning as you pleased, and there are brave breezy places in the neighbourhood to which you could transfer those stalwart Broadstairs walks of yours, and hear the sea, too, roaring in your ears."

And Forster writes to Rogers from Fort House, Broadstairs, under date September 9, 1851, . . . "I am staying with Dickens, who, with all his family, desire their most kind remembrances to you. This place is full of associations connected with you, which make it more pleasant to all of us."

Rogers was not an "out-and-out" admirer of Dickens's literary work. In conversation at Broadstairs he said to his nephew Henry Sharpe that he had been looking at the "Christmas Carol" the night before; "the first

half-hour was so dull it sent him to sleep, and the next hour was so painful that he should be obliged to finish it to get rid of the impression. He blamed Dickens's style very much, and said there was no wit in putting bad grammar into the mouths of all his characters, and showing their vulgar pronunciation by spelling 'are' 'air,' a horse without an h."

In Paris in 1843, Washington Irving nearly ran over his old friend, "we stopped and took him in. He was on one of his yearly epicurean visits to Paris, to enjoy the Italian opera and other refined sources of pleasure. The hand of age begins to bow him down, but his intellect is as clear as ever, and his talents and taste for society in full vigour. He breakfasted with us several times, and I have never known him more delightful. He would sit for two or three hours continually conversing, and giving anecdotes; of all the conspicuous persons who have figured within the last sixty years, with most of whom he had been on terms of intimacy. He has refined upon the art of telling a story, until he has brought it to the most perfect simplicity where there is not a word too much or too little, and where every word has its effect. His manner, too, is the most quiet, natural, and unpretending that can be imagined."

At last came the end :—

"Old Sam Rogers is gone at last," records William Archer Shee, "at the mature age of ninety-two. His age has been a matter of speculation among his friends for years, and he was as shy of alluding to it as any fading beauty of the other sex. . . . My earliest recollections are associated with him, having in my childhood enjoyed immensely, at each returning Christmas, the merry juvenile parties which he used to give to his nephews and nieces in St James's Place." With which pleasant

SAMUEL ROGERS.

From the Drawing by George Richmond, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

peep into the old man's way of life, let us say "May he rest in peace."

In startling contrast there stands before us now the pathetic figure of Thomas Hood, a poor man but a rich poet, a kindly wit and a joyous spirit, at whose door poverty was ever knocking with his lean finger and whose footsteps his life long were dogged by ill-health. He fought a good fight and won an undying name. He was born in 1799 and died—too soon for the world—in 1845. The grandiloquent Samuel Carter Hall describes him as "of middle height, slender and sickly-looking, of sallow complexion and plain features, quiet in expression, and very rarely excited, so as to give indication of either the pathos or the humour that must ever have been working in his soul!" It would be possible to crowd many pages with his quips and quiddities, whims and whimsicalities, but it is somewhat sad laughing at the jests of one whose life was so sorrowful, who wrote rubbish for bread and butter, and who with half Rogers's worldly advantages would, perchance, have left us more than the few lovely verses we have of his.

One jest we will retail, however; it is one of the most delightful and least known of his; this of a gentleman who was drawing the long bow with regard to his shooting; said Hood,

> "What he hit is history,
> What he missed is mystery."

There was not anything in his brave life that became him better than his leaving it.

In what was probably his last letter, written on March 24, 1845, he writes, "Still alive—but cannot last long." His plucky fight for life was drawing to an end. "He saw the oncoming of death with great cheerfulness,"

wrote a friend, "though without anything approaching to levity. Toward the end, he said, 'It's a beautiful world, and since I have been lying here, I have thought of it more and more; it is not so bad, even humanly speaking, as people would make it out. I have had some very happy days while I lived in it, and I *could* have wished to stay a little longer. But it is all for the best, and we shall all meet in a better world.'" On the first of May, feeling that he was sinking, he called his family round his bed, his beloved wife, his daughter, his son: and his last words were, "Remember, I forgive all, *all*, as I hope to be forgiven." He sleeps in Kensal Green Cemetery; his epitaph, "He sang 'The Song of The Shirt.'"

During his last illness, it is said that he made the following gruesome jest, when his wife was making a large mustard poultice for him:—"Oh, Mary, that will be a great deal of mustard to a very little meat."

He was very friendly with Dickens, of whom he writes in 1840, "Boz is a very good fellow and he and I are very good friends." It was proposed to set up a monument to him by public subscription. Asked to support this, Dickens wrote a letter which foreshadowed his hope, expressed later, that no monument should ever be raised to himself:—"I have the greatest tenderness for the memory of Hood, as I had for himself. But I am not very favourable to posthumous memorials in the monument way, and I should exceedingly regret to see any such appeal as you contemplate made public. . . . I think that I best discharge my duty to my deceased friend, and best consult the respect and love with which I remember him, by declining to join in any such public endeavour. . . I shall have a melancholy gratification in privately assisting to place a simple and plain record over the

remains of a great writer that should be as modest as he himself. . . ."

With Douglas Jerrold Dickens was upon terms of closest friendship. "He was," he says, "one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men. I remember very well that when I first saw him, in about the year 1835, when I went into his sick room in Thistle Grove, Brompton, and found him propped up in a great chair, bright eyed, and quick, and eager in spirit, but very lame in body, he gave me an impression of tenderness. . . . In the company of children and young people he was particularly happy . . . he never was so gay, so sweet-tempered, so pleasing, and so pleased as then. Among my own children I have observed this many and many a time."

There was once an estrangement for some months between the two, until one day they sat back to back in a club dining-room: Jerrold turned round, and said, "For God's sake, let us be friends again! A life's not long enough for this."

He is but a shadow of a name to this generation, a ghost of a joker to whose account many jokes have been credited which are neither his nor to his credit, and the author of "Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures," of which he himself said, "It just shows what stuff the people will swallow. I could write such rubbish as that by the yard."

Douglas William Jerrold was born in Greek Street, Soho, on January 3, 1803, and died at St John's Wood, June 8, 1857. He had varied experiences, spending some two years as a midshipman and settling in London in 1816 as apprentice to a printer in Northumberland Street, Strand. But we will jump on to the year 1845, when—a famous man of letters and of wit—he went to live at

West Lodge, Lower Putney Common; first pausing to gain some idea of his appearance and personality.

We have a description from a German pen of Jerrold in 1855:—"Douglas Jerrold then lived at Putney. . . . His house was situated on a charming plain, upon which broad-headed cattle were comfortably grazing. . . . Never did I see a handsomer head on an uglier body. Douglas Jerrold is small, with stooping shoulders; but the head placed upon those shoulders is truly magnificent. He has the head of a Jupiter on the body of a Thersites. A high, broad, cheerful, arched forehead; a very fine mouth; a well-shaped nose; clear, heaven-blue eyes. . . ."

With which we may compare this from the pen of Edmund Yates:—"I had often been in his company, and had heard him flash forth the biting epigram and quick repartee for which in our day he has had no rival. A small delicately-formed bent man, with long grey hair combed back from his forehead, with grey eyes deep set under penthouse brows, and a way, just as the inspiration seized him, of dangling a double eyeglass, which hung round his neck by a broad black ribbon: a kindly man for all his bitter tongue . . . soft and easy with women and children."

The study at his Putney home was a snug room: "All about it are books. Crowning the shelves are Milton and Shakspere. A bit of Shakspere's mulberry tree lies on the mantelpiece. Above the sofa are the 'Rent Day' and 'Distraining for Rent,' Wilkie's two pictures. Under the two prints laughs Sir Joshua's sly 'Puck,' perched upon a pulpy mushroom. . . . The furniture is simple solid oak. The desk has not a speck upon it. The marble shell upon which the inkstand rests has no litter

in it. Various notes lie in a row between clips, on the table. The paper-basket stands near the arm-chair, prepared for answered letters and rejected contributions. The little dog follows his master into his study, and lies at his feet.

"That cottage at Putney, its garden, its mulberry tree, its grass-plot, its cheery library with Douglas Jerrold as the chief figure in the scene, remains as a bright and most pleasant picture in our memory. He had an almost reverential fondness for books, books themselves, and said he could not bear to treat them, or to see them treated, with disrespect. He told us it gave him pain to see them turned on their faces, stretched open, or dog's-eared, or carelessly flung down, or in any way misused. He told us this, holding a volume in his hand with a caressing gesture, as though he tended it affectionately and gratefully for the pleasure it had given him."

There were many merry meetings there of merry spirits, and what a sight for gods and men must have been that of Dickens, Maclise, Macready, Forster, with their host Jerrold, tucking in their "tuppenies" and playing joyously at leap-frog!

Various writers have tried to make excuse for the severity and hurting-power of Jerrold's repartees, but for our part we cannot see that any defence can be made for the man who uses his gift of wit to amuse himself at the expense and with the distress of those to whom he professes friendship. Tale after tale is told, there is no questioning their truth, of bitter, wickedly-biting jests made by Jerrold upon the persons or mental qualities of those whom he met. It is not to be denied that at heart he was a most kindly and, in the best sense of the word, charitable man, but his wit too often got the better

of his heart ; he did not count the cost to others of what was mere fun to him, which he should have been able to do, for a scathing repartee " shut him up " completely. Even such a simple one as that of the young lady behind the bar, upon whom he had been exercising his wit ; " There's your grog," she said, " mind you don't fall into it, little man."

Here are a few specimens of his wit :

Heraud, the poet, enquired of Jerrold if he had seen his " Descent into Hell "; said Jerrold, " I wish to Heaven I had ! "

" That air always carries me away when I hear it," said a bore.

" Can nobody whistle it ? " asked Jerrold.

" Orion " Horne went to Australia, leaving his wife in England ; he treated her, said Jerrold, with " unremitting kindness."

Leigh Hunt said of him, that if he had—and he had—the sting of the bee, he also had the honey.

As an example of Jerrold's kindlier wit, may be repeated his answer when asked by Charles Knight to write his epitaph ; " Good Knight," said Jerrold.

He had a quaint, whimsical way of putting things. One bitterly cold spring night, walking home across Westminster Bridge, he remarked to his companions : " I blame nobody ; but they call this May ! "

Of Jerrold's real kindliness the following story is a pleasant confirmation. While living at Putney he had a brougham built for him. At the coachmaker's one day he was looking at the immaculate varnish on the back of the vehicle.

" Its polish is perfect now," he said, " but the urchins will soon cover it with scratches."

"But, sir, I can put on a few spikes that will keep them off——"

"No—to me a thousand scratches on my carriage would be more welcome than one on the hand of a footsore lad, to whom a stolen lift might be a godsend."

One of his less well-known accomplishments was that of whistling with great sweetness.

On the 8th of June, 1857, Dickens met Jerrold at the Gallery of Illustration, Regent Street—afterward better known as German Reeds'—where they were to meet W. H. Russell to advise him with regard to his lectures on the War in the Crimea. "Arriving some minutes before the time," Dickens related to Blanchard Jerrold, "I found your father sitting alone in the hall. I sat down by him in a niche on the staircase, and he told me that he had been very unwell for three or four days. A window in his study had been newly painted, and the smell of the paint (he thought it must be that) had filled him with nausea and turned him sick, and he felt weak and giddy, through not having been able to retain any food. He was a little subdued at first, and out of spirits; but we sat there half an hour talking, and when we came out together he was quite himself. In the shadow I had not observed him closely; but when we got into the sunshine of the streets I saw that he looked ill. We were both engaged to dine with Mr Russell at Greenwich, and I thought him so ill that I advised him not to go . . . we walked on to Covent Garden, and before we had gone fifty yards he was very much better. . . . It would do him good to have a few quiet hours in the air, and he would go on with us to Greenwich. . . . We strolled through the Temple on our way to a boat; and I have a lively recollection of him, stamping about Elm Tree

Court (with his hat in one hand, and the other pushing his hair back), laughing in his heartiest manner at a ridiculous remembrance we had in common, which I had presented in some exaggerated light to divert him. We found our boat, and went down the river, . . . and talked all the way. . . . The dinner-party was a large one, and I did not sit near him at table. But he and I had arranged, before we went in to dinner, that he was to eat only of some simple dish that we agreed upon, and was only to drink sherry and water. We broke up very early, and before I went away with Mr Leech, who was to take me to London, I went round to Jerrold, and put my hand upon his shoulder, asking him how he was. He turned round to show me the glass beside him, with a little wine and water in it. 'I have kept to the prescription. . . . I have quite got over the paint, and I am perfectly well.' He was really elated by the relief of having recovered, and was as quietly happy as I ever saw him. We exchanged 'God bless you!' and shook hands.

"I went down to Gad's Hill next morning, where he was to write to me after a little while, appointing his own time for coming to see me there. A week afterwards, another passenger in the railway carriage in which I was on my way to London Bridge, opened his morning paper, and said: 'Douglas Jerrold is dead!'"

XI

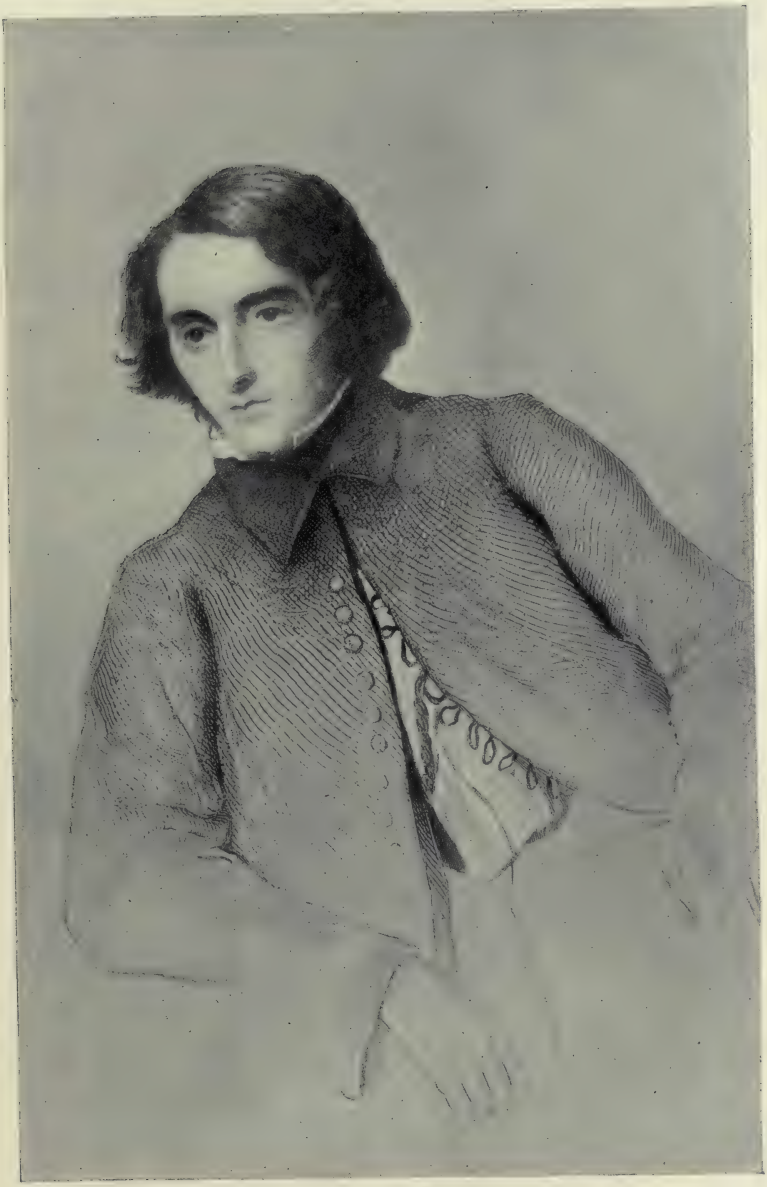
A GROUP OF ARTISTS

MR W. P. FRITH in his truly delightful Reminiscences tells an amusing story of some of those who will appear in these pages. Two of the best known frescoes in the Houses of Parliament are by Maclise, "The Death of Nelson" and "The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher after the Battle of Waterloo." On the invitation of the painter of them, John Phillip—Phillip of Spain—Egg, and Frith went to see the completed Wellington, with which they were greatly struck. "I shall go and put the dashed thing I am doing on the fire," exclaimed Phillip, as they walked away homeward. "We didn't say half enough to him about it," said Egg, "let us send him a congratulatory address—a round-robin, or something." On the proposal of Frith it was decided to add to the address a small gift, a silver port-crayon or pencil case, and when the question arose of asking others to join in with them, Frith volunteered to approach Landseer, from whom he received the following reply :—"Dear Frith, I have been away and unwell, which partly accounts for my apparent want of attention to your note, telling of the affectionate intentions towards our justly-valued friend, D. Maclise. I am inclined to think the committee, or whoever suggested this testimonial to D. M., would do well to pause and reconsider the matter. I think the scheme out of proportion with

the *gigantic achievement*, and that it comes at the *wrong time*. You may sincerely believe in my respect and admiration for his great genius, and that I as faithfully appreciate the man, who is the best fellow on earth." As Frith himself admits, the pencil case on one side and Maclise's frescoes on the other were slightly out of proportion, but we know that the kindly, generous Irishman did not look at the affair in this light, but welcomed warmly the mark of appreciation from his brothers of the palette.

Daniel M'Clise, or Maclise as he afterward wrote his name, was born in Cork on January 25, 1811, being the son of a small tradesman. The first notable event of his life occurred when he was fourteen years of age. Sir Walter Scott was that year touring in Ireland, in company of the Lockharts and Miss Edgeworth, and visited Cork. Maclise finding out that the famous Scotsman was calling at the shop of a well-known bookseller named Bolster, seized the opportunity to make a sketch of Sir Walter, which he worked up at home and the next day procured its exhibition in the shop, where it was noticed by the great man himself. Maclise was dragged forward, and Scott, astonished at the skill of the juvenile artist, signed his name to the sketch. The drawing was lithographed, and the copies sold brought Maclise immediate profit and profitable notoriety. In July, 1827, he went to London, entering the Royal Academy Schools, where he worked with assiduity and success.

He was a tall man, over six feet in height ; his forehead high, crowned with dark, glossy curls, and his eyes large and expressive, the lips rather full. Frith describes Maclise as a man " delightful in every way," good-looking, generous, an enthusiast in his appreciation of the work of others and untouched by envy.



AUGUSTUS L. EGG, R.A.

From a Sketch by W. P. Frith, R.A.

Forster waxes enthusiastic over him when writing of the company that visited Dickens at Twickenham in 1838. " Nor was there anything that exercised a greater fascination over Dickens than the grand enjoyment of idleness, the ready self-abandonment to the luxury of laziness, which we both so laughed at in Maclise, under whose easy swing of indifference, always the most amusing at the most aggravating events and times, we knew that there was artist-work as eager, energy as unwearying, and observation almost as penetrating as Dickens's own." He goes on to mention " a quaint oddity that in him gave to shrewdness itself an air of Irish simplicity," and speaks of his " handsome person." Indeed, they were fine young fellows all in those days, and dandies the most of them, all honour to them.

In May, 1838, Maclise, then well on the road to a fame of which time has somewhat dimmed the lustre, had been introduced by Forster to Dickens, and the two struck up an affectionate and lasting friendship. His portrait of Dickens, now in the National Portrait Gallery, was exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1840. It is generally known that when the painting was completed Dickens sent the artist a handsome cheque, which was returned, accompanied by the following letter :—" My dear Dickens, How could *you* think of sending me a cheque for what was to me a matter of gratification ? I am almost inclined to be offended with you. May I not be permitted to give some proof of the value I attach to your friendship ? I return the cheque, and regret that you should have thought it necessary to send it to yours faithfully, Daniel Maclise." To which Dickens responded : " Do not be offended. I quite appreciate the feeling which induced you to return what I sent you ; notwithstanding,

I *must* ask you to take it back again. If I could have contemplated for an instant the selfish engrossment of so much of your time and extraordinary powers, I should have had no need (knowing you, I knew that well) to resort to the little device I played off. I will take anything else from you at any time that you will give me, any scrap from your hand; but I entreat you not to disturb this matter. I am willing to be your debtor for anything else in the whole wide range of your art, as you shall very readily find whenever you put me to the proof."

Thackeray pronounced the portrait "perfectly amazing —a looking-glass could not render a better facsimile."

Maclise died of acute pneumonia in 1870. To the very last art was all in all to him, and on the day before his death, which occurred on the 25th of April, he tried to work, but the pencil fell from his fingers. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, the annual dinner of the Royal Academy taking place on the same day, at which Dickens's last words spoken in public were a eulogy of his friend: "The gentlest and most modest of men, the freshest as to his generous appreciation of young aspirants, and the frankest and largest hearted as to his peers, incapable of a sordid or ignoble thought, gallantly sustaining the true dignity of his vocation, without one grain of self-ambition, wholesomely natural at the last as at the first, 'in wit a man, simplicity a child.'"

Of Egg, Dickens writes, he "is an excellent fellow, and full of good qualities; I am sure a generous and staunch man at heart, and a good and honourable nature." Augustus Leopold Egg was born in 1816, became a student at the Royal Academy in 1836 and R.A. in 1860. Holman Hunt describes him as "a keen reader and renderer of human expression, he had distinguished himself from

his compeers by the freshness of his pictorial dramas, so that he reached at times the realm of poetic interpretation." In and round about 1850 he lived in Ivy Cottage, in Black Lion Lane, now Queen's Road, Bayswater, then almost countrified; the house was ancient and picturesque, and was the scene of many a pleasant party and jollification. Frith relates a funny tale of Mulready, who persistently refused Egg's frequent invitations. It transpired that he did so, because he believed that Leech in his amusing caricature of the once famous Mulready envelope had insinuated that the designer of it was "a leech and a bloodsucker," the mistake arising from Mulready's ignorance of Leech's habit of signing his work with a bottle containing a leech. The matter was explained, the next invitation accepted, and Mulready astonished and amused Leech, with whom he became very friendly, by narrating the delusion under which he had laboured.

Egg was of somewhat Jewish appearance, large nose, large mouth, long black hair—a regular mane, which he had a habit of tossing.

Mark Lemon was a frequent guest at Egg's dinners, and Frith describes him as apt to be quarrelsome when he had imbibed the amount of wine which in others conduces to increased joviality.

The dining-room was long, low, and narrow, the table round, the walls covered with engravings by S. W. Reynolds, after the greater Reynolds, and there was a first-rate cook and an excellent cellar. Let us take a peep at a party whereat beside the host were Dickens, Frith, Mark Lemon, Leech, and others. So well-served was the banquet that Dickens proposed a vote of thanks to the cook, suggesting that she should be summoned and ad-

dressed by him. " Like most good cooks," said the host, " she has an uncertain temper, and I shouldn't advise you to try it—she wouldn't understand your ' appropriate language ' as meant seriously, and she might resent it in her own language, which, I believe, is sometimes described by her kitchen companions as ' bad language.' "

Lemon topped this with a serio-comic story of a ferocious cook of a friend of his, with whom he had a terrific encounter.

Books, pictures, painters, actors were in turn discussed. Of Charles Kean, Dickens acutely said: " If you can imagine port wine without its flavour, you have a fair comparison between the elder Kean and his son."

After dessert, at Forster's request, Leech sang a song, probably his favourite " King Death," written by Barry Cornwall, which he used to sing with pathetic solemnity, arousing, usually, uproarious laughter. Here are a few lines:

" King Death was a rare old fellow,
He sat where no sun could shine,
And he lifted his hands so yellow
To drink of his coal-black wine.
Hurra ! for the coal-black wine ! "

He had a deep, sympathetic voice, and after listening to him one time, Jerrold remarked: " I say, Leech, if you had the same opportunity of exercising your voice as you have of using your pencil, how it would *draw !* "

At Egg's, Dickens interrupted the song with: " There, that will do. If you go on any longer you will make me cry."

Then followed a story by Leech, a mild gamble at a quaint game called " Races," at which Dickens lost all his loose silver and was not allowed to stake his watch and chain, as he solemnly proposed to do, a visit to Egg's " workshop " to inspect his " goods," and then the host,

in reply to a query from Dickens, told the following strange story (we quote Mr Frith) of " a pencil drawing of great beauty, representing a handsome young man—the head and bust only—" which hung in the dining-room, " and below the drawing was a small piece of discoloured linen with an inscription."

" What is the history of this ? " asked Dickens. " Can you tell us ? Who is this good-looking young fellow ? and what is the meaning of this discoloured stuff, which looks as if it had been white at one time ? "

" Yes," said Egg ; " it was white at one time, but that time is long ago. Sit down all of you, and I will tell you about it. The room you have just left, where I work, was built by Reynolds, the engraver, about 1815, or thereabouts. A boy named Cousins was apprenticed to him about that time to learn the art of engraving. The boy's parents were very poor, and the lad had been their main support by making pencil likenesses, which he executed with wonderful skill. This practice with the pencil was of great service to him in learning the different processes of mezzotinto engraving, and he advanced very rapidly in his new art, to the great satisfaction of his master, with whom he became a favourite pupil, and eventually a very efficient assistant. One day—in 1817, I think, but am not sure about the date—a young man, dressed in a coat with a fur collar, and the many capes in favour with the youth of that period—a handsome, gipsy-like fellow—called upon Reynolds, and was shown into the engraving-room. After the usual greetings, Reynolds said, ' Now, you must let me have your likeness. I have a lad here who will take you in no time.' ' Well,' said the young man, ' if he is as rapid as that,' or something like it, ' he may try his hand ; but five-and-twenty

minutes are about all I can give him.' 'Sit down there, then,' said Reynolds. 'Now, Cousins, my boy, do your best.' In less than half an hour the drawing was made from the features, but the hair was still unfinished; except that, the likeness was perfect. 'Give him five minutes more for the hair.' 'Five minutes, and no more,' said the sitter, taking out his watch. The hair was done, and the gipsy-like-looking man shook hands with the boy, patted him upon the head, and went away. 'Well done, Cousins, my boy. Now, do you know who it was you have been drawing?' 'No, sir.' 'That young fellow was Edmund Kean, who took the town by storm in Shylock the other night.' And," concluded Egg, "the piece of linen affixed to the drawing was torn from the breast of Kean's shirt by himself in one of his storms of passion in Sir Giles Overreach; and the lad Cousins is the well-known engraver and Academician."

Egg was a capital host, and amongst his gifts was a quiet fund of dry humour. He showed himself superior to many of his contemporary artists by his early and enthusiastic recognition of the work of Holman Hunt, which differed so greatly in aim from his own.

The following quaint anecdote is related of him as an amateur actor:—

In Lytton's "Not So Bad as We Seem," Egg was "discovered" when the curtain rose, and thus soliloquised: "Years ago, when under happier circumstances—" which the actor invariably rendered, "Here's a go, etc."

Holman Hunt carried the news of his death to Wilkie Collins, who was overwhelmed by it, and said: "And so I shall never any more shake that dear hand and look into that beloved face! And, Holman, all we can resolve is to be closer together as more precious in having had his

affection." To Hunt, Dickens wrote of Egg, referring chiefly to their dramatic travels: "The dear fellow was always one of the most popular of the party, always sweet-tempered, humorous, conscientious, thoroughly good, and thoroughly beloved."

We must not stop with the Landseers for long; we have so many friends to make; art is long, but books should not be overlong. They were three: Thomas, born in 1795, Charles in 1799, and Edwin Henry in 1802, the sons of the well-known engraver John Landseer. Thomas, too, "whom everyone quite loves for his sweet nature" writes Dickens, was an engraver, helping to popularise many of his youngest brother's famous pictures; he was a big, genial, stout man, afflicted with deafness, which he asserted to have been the result of standing too near to a cannon when it was fired. Once at an evening party he gathered from the clapping of hands that he could see that the song he had not heard had been a success; he approached the singer, and made this appalling request: "That must have been a delightful song of yours; would you mind singing a verse or two into my trumpet?" Charles and Edwin were both slight, active men, but the former, when not making puns, was apt to be brusque, whereas Sir Edwin was a most courtly person, and spoke with a drawl, natural or acquired. A daughter of Mr Frith describes him thus: "he was small and compact, and wore a beautiful shirt with a frill in which was placed a glittering diamond brooch or pin, I do not know which; and he looked to me like one of his own most good-humoured white poodles. He was curled and scented and exquisitely turned out." The same writer tells a comic story of him: he was walking one day with a certain duchess through a glen where workmen had been making extensive altera-

tions in the face of nature; "I can't think how it was managed," said he; "oh, it was quite easy," was her reply, startling from so mild mannered a personage, "it was a mere matter of damming and blasting."

A quaint story is told of him when he was "visitor" at the R. A. Life School. His father—John Landseer—came in one night and found his son reading—

"Why don't you draw?" asked the old man.

"Don't feel inclined," the son shouted down his father's ear trumpet.

"What's the book?"

"Oliver Twist."

"Is it about art?"

"No; it's about Oliver Twist."

"Let me look at it. Ha! It's some of Dickens's nonsense, I see. You'd much better draw than waste your time upon such stuff as that."

When Edwin proposed that Sydney Smith should sit to him for his portrait, he met with the retort: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

He could work almost as well with his left as with his right hand. He had the faculty of imitating the cries of animals with marvellous truth, and the tale is told of his approaching, on all fours, a savage dog, which was so terrified at his snarls and growls that he snapped his chain, leaped over the wall, and appeared no more.

We will now turn to some of the artists whose connection with Dickens was a matter of business as well as of friendship, at any rate in most cases; we mean to those who were associated with him as illustrators of his work.

With George Cruikshank we need not stay long, for he can have had little if any affinity with Dickens. He was born in 1792, and lived on until 1878, and, no doubt,

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER, R.A.

From the Sketch by Sir F. Grant, P.R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

accounted for his length of years by the strength of his teetotalism. In "Leaves from a Life," a highly entertaining work, we read, "a most eccentric couple whom I, at any rate, hated, were Mr and Mrs George Cruikshank; but I have never seen any woman worship her husband as did Mrs George. . . . she would never allow anyone to speak if George wanted to lay down the law on any particular subject, and she invariably took care that some time or other during the evening he should be encouraged to sing, or else to give 'in costume' the moving ballad of 'Lord Bateman.' As the costume consisted always of my very best hat and red feather worn rakishly on the side of his head, and my sacred red 'opera cloak' flung over one shoulder, I could scarcely retain my rage, especially as he had no more idea of singing than a crow, and he used to declaim the 'Ballad' hopping round and round the inner drawing-room, with Mrs Cruikshank following him with admiring eyes and leading and enforcing applause when he stopped for an instant in his wild career."

He apparently went entirely mad over the drink question, of which, as an example, may be recorded an encounter between him and Mrs Lynn Linton: "one evening," she relates, "we had been to Westland Marston's, and we walked home together. On the way we passed a group of rowdy drunken men and women. Suddenly George stopped, and, taking hold of my arm, said solemnly:

"'*You* are responsible for those poor wretches.'

"I answered that I did not exactly see this, and disclaimed any share in their degradation. But he insisted on it, and hung those ruined souls like infernal bells about my neck, tinkling out my own damnation, because at supper I had drunk a glass of champagne from which he had vainly tried to dissuade me!"

At an evening party at Dickens's, Cruikshank went up to the wife of a celebrated artist, who was innocently drinking a glass of sherry, which he brusquely took away, exclaiming: "You dare not take it, you must not take it!" Luckily Dickens noted the performance; clutching Cruikshank by the arm, he said: "How dare you touch it! Just because you've been a drunken old reprobate all your life, there's no reason why she shouldn't drink a glass of wine. Give it back at once."

He seems, indeed, to have made a terrible nuisance of his hobby—we find Shirley Brooks noting in his diary: "Old George Cruikshank called on me . . . to express his regret, or rather to talk about himself and end with a tea-total moral, which I snubbed. Never cared for this man, and yet he is a wondrous artist in a limited way."

Jerrold, meeting him after his conversion to the water cult, said: "Now, George, remember that water is good anywhere—*except on the brain.*" The jest contained wise advice by which the receiver of it did not profit.

Hablot Knight Browne, best known as "Phiz," was a man much more after Dickens's heart. He was the descendant of an exiled Huguenot, named Simon Brunet, and was born on July 12, 1815, in Kennington Lane, the ninth son of his father. He was apprenticed to Finden, the engraver, but he disliked the mechanical work. His friendship with Dickens commenced with "Pickwick," and it is related that the rejected Thackeray carried to Browne the news that the latter had been selected for the work, the two celebrating the occasion at a tavern with sausages and stout. He does not, however, seem to have been a very "social" man, but rather reserved, and latterly to have grown out of touch with Dickens. "I was about the last of those he knew in early days

with whom Dickens fell out," he said to Mr Arthur Allchin, " and considering the grand people he had around him, and the compliments he perpetually received, it is a wonder we remained friends so long."

Later still, writing to one of his sons about the illustrations to " A Tale of Two Cities," the last work of Dickens for which he made the drawings, he says: " A rather curious thing happened with this book: Watts Phillips the dramatist hit upon the very same identical plot; they had evidently both of them been to the same source in Paris for their story. Watts' play came out with great success, with stunning climax, at about the time of Dickens's sixth number. The public saw that they were identically the same story, so Dickens shut up at the ninth[1] number instead of going on to the eighteenth as usual. All this put Dickens out of temper, and he squabbled with me amongst others, and I never drew another line for him."

He died at Hove in 1882.

He was for long connected with *Punch*, beginning to work for it in 1842, the second year of its life, and drew its second wrapper. Even after his illness in 1861 he continued to work for it, drawing with the pencil tied to his fingers.

Of the earlier and happier days of his dealings with Dickens, we have some glimpses, which are also interesting in that they bring home to us the difference in travelling in those days and these. In the summer of 1837, he and Dickens and his wife went for a ten days' trip abroad, landing at Calais on July 2. Dickens writes to Forster: " we have arranged for a post-coach to take us to Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, and a hundred other places,

[1] Actually the eighth number.

that I cannot recollect now and couldn't spell if I did." Then in February of the succeeding year he accompanied Dickens to Yorkshire, in search of "local colour" for Dotheboys' Hall. Dickens writes to his wife of this journey: "As we came further north the mire grew deeper. About eight o'clock it began to fall heavily, and, as we crossed the wild heaths hereabout, there was no vestige of a track. The man kept on well, however, and at eleven we reached a bare place with a house standing alone in the midst of a dreary moor. . . . I was in a perfect agony of apprehension, for it was fearfully cold, and there was no outward sign of anybody being up in the house. But to our great joy we discovered a comfortable room, with drawn curtains and a most blazing fire. In half an hour they gave us a smoking supper and a bottle of mulled port (in which we drank your health), and then we retired to a couple of capital bedrooms, in each of which there was a rousing fire halfway up the chimney. . . We have had for breakfast, toast, cakes, a Yorkshire pie, a piece of beef about the size and much the shape of my portmanteau, tea, coffee, ham, and eggs."

We may take this opportunity of expressing the opinion that Dickens has scarcely received sufficient credit as a writer of admirable letters: a department of literature in which he is amongst the great.

John Leech must have been a man of singular and striking charm; all men and women seem to have had a kind word to say for him. He was born in 1817, his father being the proprietor of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill, and was educated at the Charterhouse, where began his life-long friendship with Thackeray, who often told of Leech's arrival at the school, a small boy of seven, in little blue jacket and high-buttoned trousers, and of his being

set upon a table and being made to sing. Leech's mother took a room in a house from which she could overlook the school and watch her son playing his games. Later he became a medical student, one of his comrades being Albert Smith, but *res angustæ* made him take to drawing for a livelihood. When nineteen years old, on the death of Seymour, he offered himself, unsuccessfully it need scarcely be recorded, as illustrator of "Pickwick," with the author of which he was to become so intimate.

Leech in 1838 is thus pictured by Henry Vizetelly: He was "a good-looking young fellow, though somewhat of the Dundreary type—tall and slim, with glossy brown hair negligently arranged in the then prevailing fashion, and the luxuriant whiskers," also the mode of the moment.

Leech used to live in a terrace of three or four houses that was just beyond the turning called Wright's Lane, in Kensington, and there he died. A girl-friend describes him as "tall and blue-eyed, irritable and energetic," but it would be nearer the truth to substitute for "irritable," nervous. Mrs Leech was a pretty, early-Victorian little woman, who often made her appearance in her husband's drawings; a quiet, Martha-like housewife, who scarcely realised, perhaps, how great a part she played in her "man's" life. There was much of romance in the way he met and wooed her. One day, in 1843, he passed a bewitching young lady in the street, was bewitched, discreetly followed her home, hunted up her name in the directory, contrived to obtain an introduction to her, wooed and won her. Thus, in this highly-romantic way Miss Annie Eaton became Mrs John Leech, and appeared again and again in his *Punch* pictures as one of the "plump young beauties" whom Thackeray admired.

Dean Hole, who first met Leech in 1858, thus describes him: "He was very like my idea of him, only 'more so.' A slim, elegant figure, over six feet in height, with a grand head, on which nature had written 'gentleman'—with wonderful genius in his ample forehead; wonderful penetration, observation, humour, in his blue-gray Irish eyes; and wonderful sweetness, sympathy and mirth about his lips, which seemed to speak in silence."

Du Maurier describes him as "the most charming companion conceivable, having intimately known so many important and celebrated people, and liking to speak of them. . . . He was tall, thin, and graceful, extremely handsome, of the higher Irish type, with dark hair and whiskers and complexion, and very light greyish-blue eyes; but the expression of his face was habitually sad, even when he smiled."

One of the neatest stories of Leech's "good things" is this: on one occasion while drawing the illustrations for some of Albert Smith's books, artist and author were leaving the latter's house together, when a small urchin jeeringly read out the inscription on the brass door-plate:

"Ho, yus! Mister Albert Smith, M.R.C.S., Surgin Dentist!"

"Good boy," said Leech, "here's a penny for you; now go and insult somebody else."

On another occasion, the joke was on Leech, who, indeed, does not seem to have been a maker but more an illustrator of jests. He and some friends were visiting a waxworks show, and Leech, looking at a lean representation of George IV, exclaimed: "I thought George IV was a fat man." "Did yer?" retorted the irritated showman, "Did yer? Yer wouldn't be a fat man neither if you'd been kep without vittles so long as him!"

JOHN LEECH.

From the Drawing by Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery. Photograph by Emery Walker.

THACKERAY AND LEECH

When Thackeray died, in 1863, Leech said: "I saw the remains of the poor dear fellow, and, I assure you, I can hardly get over it. A happy or a merry Christmas is out of the question." On hearing of his death, Leech said to a colleague on *Punch:* "I feel somehow I shan't survive him long, and I shouldn't much care either, if it were not for my family."

And when Leech himself was no more, Thackeray's daughter, Mrs Ritchie (now Lady Ritchie) exclaimed: "How happy my father will be to meet him."

Punch's epitaph on him was "to know him well was to love him dearly." He was buried close to Thackeray at Kensal Green, among the pall bearers being Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Tom Taylor, Horace Mayhew, Sir John Tenniel, Sir Francis Cowley Burnand, and Sir John Everett Millais.

XII

THACKERAY

THACKERAY and Dickens knew and esteemed each other, but there can be no doubt that there was not anything of really intimate friendship between them. It will be sufficient, therefore, in these pages to show briefly the points and occasions of contact between the two. Thackeray was born in 1811 at Calcutta, and, as we have seen, while at the Charterhouse began his friendship with John Leech; also, as we have seen, he first met Dickens in the "Pickwick" days at Furnival's Inn. We hear—briefly—of Thackeray's occasional appearances at Dickens's house for theatrical and other entertainments, and on October 13, 1855, Dickens took the chair at a dinner given in the London Tavern to Thackeray on his departure to pay his second visit to America. Of which occasion it may be noted, as indicating the troubles that meet even such vagabondish historians as ourselves, that one chronicler says Dickens surpassed himself in his speech, another states that he was not very happy; one notes that Thackeray was not very good, another would have us believe that he excelled himself. So many listeners so many opinions, apparently.

Dickens observed and recorded Thackeray's fondness for children: "he had a particular delight in boys, and an excellent way with them. I remember his once asking me,

with fantastic gravity, when he had been to Eton, where my eldest boy then was, whether I felt as he did in regard of never seeing a boy without wanting instantly to give him a sovereign."

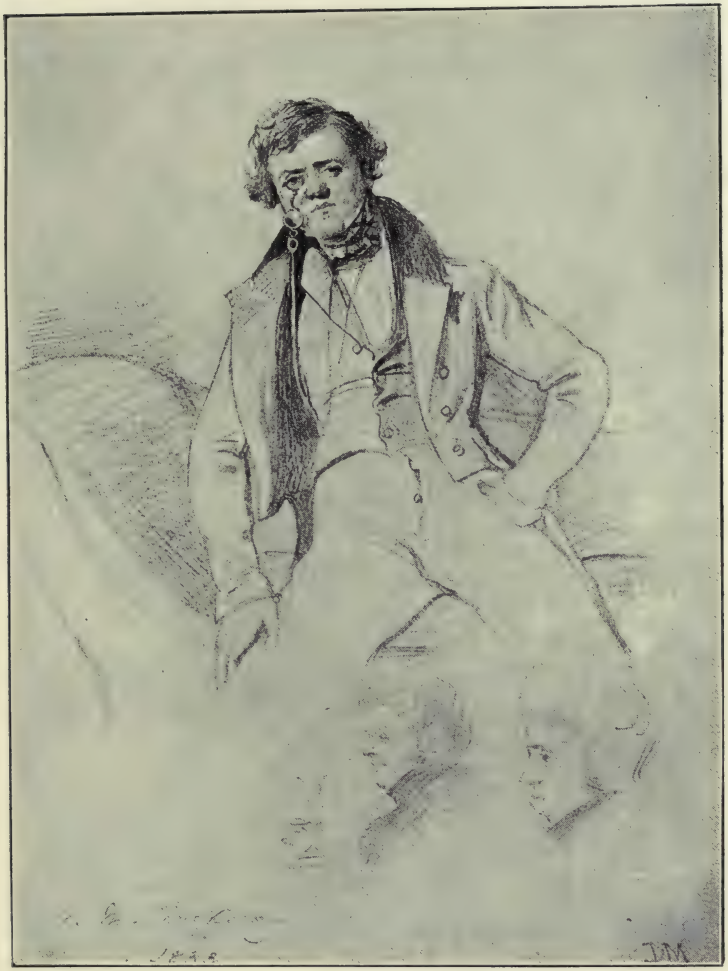
In the summer of 1858, Thackeray and Dickens were entangled in an unfortunate squabble arising out of a foolish article in *Town Talk*, written by Edmund Yates. Indeed, in some of its sentences rather more than foolish, as for example: "No one succeeds better than Mr Thackeray in cutting his coat according to his cloth. Here he flattered the aristocracy; but when he crossed the Atlantic George Washington became the idol of his worship." Yates, himself, admitted the "silliness and bad taste" of the article, which annoyed Thackeray the more, for he thought it an invasion on the privacy of intercourse at the Garrick Club, of which both were members, as also was Dickens. He promptly made matters worse by a strong letter to the delinquent, who went to Dickens for advice, and the battle of the giants—with Tom Thumb in between—began in earnest. Thackeray's next step was to appeal to the Club committee, with the result that at the general meeting, in spite of a spirited defence by Dickens and Wilkie Collins, Yates was condemned to banishment from the Club unless he tendered an ample apology. This resulted in Yates's retirement, and in an estrangement between Thackeray and Dickens, which did not come to an end until a week before the death of the former in 1863. The two shook hands and "made it up" at the Athenæum.

To the *Cornhill Magazine* for February, 1864, Dickens contributed a fine eulogy of his dead friend and rival: "No one can be surer than I of the greatness and goodness of his heart. . . . The last words he corrected in print

were 'And my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss.' God grant that on that Christmas Eve when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he was wont to do when very weary, some consciousness of duty done, and of Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart so to throb, when he passed away to his Redeemer's rest. He was found peacefully lying as above described, composed, undisturbed, and to all appearance asleep."

Which may fitly be followed by lines written by Thackeray of Dickens:

"Have you read Dickens? O! it is charming! brave Dickens! It has some of his prettiest touches—those inimitable Dickens touches which make such a great man of him; and the reading of the book has done another author a great deal of good. In the first place it pleases the other author to see that Dickens, who has left off alluding to the A's works, has been copying the O. A., and greatly simplifying his style, and overcoming the use of fine words. By this the public will be the gainer and *David Copperfield* will be improved by taking a lesson from *Vanity Fair*."



W. M. THACKERAY.
From a Sketch by D. Maclise, R.A.

XIII

NORTHWARD HO!

OUR stage has now become fairly crowded with principal figures; it is time that the action of the piece proceeded, though, indeed, our plot is but loosely jointed and our scenario most vague.

There are events in the year 1841 which have claims upon our attention. We will begin with a minor matter.

On the 21st of January, 1841, Macready called upon Dickens, and the two went on together to call on Rogers. He relates that he asked "Boz" to spare the life of Little Nell, and "observed that he was cruel. He blushed, and men who blush are said to be either proud or cruel; he is not proud, and therefore—or, as Dickens added—the axiom is false." The next day he found at home a note from Dickens with a forthcoming number of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in which "The Old Curiosity Shop" was published. "I saw one print in it of the dear dead child that gave a dead chill through my blood. I dread to read it, but I must get it over. . . . I have never read printed words that gave me so much pain. I could not weep for some time. Sensation, sufferings have returned to me, that are terrible to awaken: it is real to me; I cannot criticise." A little girl of his own, three years of age, had died less than a year before.

Then in March, so Forster records, Dickens received a letter from Lord Jeffrey, in Edinburgh, in which he

declared that there had been "nothing so good as Nell since Cordelia"! With this amazing piece of criticism came the information that there was a desire in Edinburgh that he should pay that town a visit. Dickens had been contemplating a trip to Ireland, but this he now rejected in favour of Northward Ho! Jeffrey paid a visit to London early in April, but a gloom was cast over the festivities by the news of the death of Wilkie, which Dickens could scarce bring himself to realise: "my heart assures me Wilkie liveth," he said, "he is the sort of man who will be *very* old when he dies."

Wilkie we meet at the Nickleby dinner-celebration at the Albion, in Aldersgate Street, on October 5, 1839. Of the party were Talfourd, Maclise, Macready, and Forster, who tells us that Wilkie "made a speech as good as his pictures," touching in quaint and homely language upon Dickens's genius.

Sir David Wilkie, whose works have immortalised himself and whose death inspired one of Turner's greatest works, was born in Fifeshire in 1785, coming to London twenty years later. He will appear no more in these pages and makes no great figure in the life of Dickens, so we must be content with obtaining a passing glimpse of him as he appeared to some of his friends. C. R. Leslie says: "The little peculiarities of his character, as they all arose from the best intentions, rather endeared him to his friends than otherwise. He was a modest man, and had no wish to attract attention by eccentricity; and indeed all his oddity, and he was in many things very odd, arose from an extreme desire to be exactly like other people."

Jerdan describes him as "tall and slightly *gauche*, he was frank and straightforward, and open as the day.

There was, indeed, a simplicity in his character which tended to make society his friends. . . . He was also rather grave, or undemonstrative in his demeanour; and even when he appeared at evening parties he might have been mistaken for a Dominie Samson. Yet sometimes Sir David would astonish his younger friends by a specimen of a Scottish dance, a reminiscence of his earlier flings—double quick, over the buckle, and I know not what other strange frisks and capering vagaries."

E. M. Ward speaks of him as "always wrapped up as if suffering from imperfect circulation; generally two coats on while in the house—very neat in his person: he painted in a room looking out on the Kensington Road—he was then living on the right-hand side of the way, opposite Lower Phillimore Place, some distance beyond the church. . . . I heard Wilkie make his last speech at a dinner at the Royal Academy at the end of the exhibition, previously to his journey to the East, where he died:[1] it was a very strange one for a Scotchman, as he said that the Scotch owed everything to the English. I remember the following sentences: 'Where we had sheep-walks ye gave us roads; where we had *kilts* ye gave us *breeks*.' David Roberts growled out, 'Hoot, mon! they didna' give us brains.'"

It was not in, but on his way home from a tour in the East that Wilkie died on board the *Oriental*. The ship had just left Gibraltar and immediately put back, but, permission being refused to land the body, the burial took place at sea.

"What a genius was in this Wilkie," Carlyle writes in his Journal, "a great broad energy of humour and sympathy; a real painter in his way, alone among us

[1] But see below.

since Hogarth's time—reflected with sorrow that the man was dead, that I had seen him with indifference, without recognition, while he lived. Poor Wilkie! A very stunted, timidly proud, uninviting, unproductive-looking man. . . . I saw Wilkie and did not know him. One should have his eyes opener."

But before we go North with Dickens we will make the acquaintance of "that bright old man" Jeffrey, as Dr John Brown called him. Francis Jeffrey, Lord Jeffrey, was born in 1773, and his fame chiefly rests upon the critical and other articles which he wrote in the *Edinburgh Review*, of which he was one of the founders in 1802, and which he edited from 1803 to 1829.

Two visitors to him in 1838 have left us their impressions, and once again we find that opinions do differ in a manner that sometimes is almost incredible.

Carlyle seems to have been disappointed: "My esteem for Jeffrey," he says, "could not hide from me that at bottom our speech was, as I said, clatter. In fact, he is becoming an amiable old fribble, very cheerful, very heartless, very forgettable and tolerable."

Charles Sumner stayed with him at Craig Crook Castle, and records: "never have I heard anyone express himself with such grace, beauty, precision, and variety of words as did Jeffrey . . . superlatively eminent as a converser, —light, airy, poetical, argumentative, fantastical, and yet full of the illustrations of literature and history. . . . English did, indeed, fall mended from his lips. Words the most apt, and yet out of ordinary reach, came at his bidding, like well-trained servants. He spoke of anciently passing along the streets of Edinburgh, and having water *ejaculated* upon his head . . . Jeffrey against all the world!"

Of his real good-heartedness a good example is his letter to Moore, when, in 1819, the poet's finances were at a low ebb: "I cannot from my heart," writes the critic, "resist adding another word. I have heard of your misfortunes and of the noble way you bear them. Is it very impertinent to say that I have £500 entirely at your service, which you may repay when you please; and as much more, which I can advance upon any reasonable security of repayment in seven years. Perhaps it is very unpardonable in me to say this; but upon my honour, I would not *make* you the offer, if I did not feel that I would *accept* it without scruple from you." This from the man whose caustic and unjustifiable criticism had in past days led to an "affair of honour" between these two, which only just did not come off, ending in farce. It is characteristic of both men that, while their seconds were making the final arrangements on the field of battle, they strolled up and down together, chatting in most friendly spirit.

When one complained to Sydney Smith that Jeffrey had irritably damned the North Pole when that subject was introduced, he promptly and sympathizingly remarked: "I've heard him speak disrespectfully of the equator."

He died in 1850.

"Poor dear Jeffrey!" writes Dickens of the event, "I . . . was so stunned by the announcement . . . I had a letter from him in extraordinary good spirits within this week or two . . . I say nothing of his wonderful abilities and great career, but he was a most affectionate and devoted friend to me; and though no man could wish to live and die more happily, so old in years and yet so young in faculties and sympathies, I am very, very deeply grieved for his loss."

Mr and Mrs Dickens arrived in Edinburgh on June 23, and promptly proceeded to sight-see. Among the first people they met was Professor Wilson, " a tall, burly, handsome man of eight-and-fifty, with a gait like O'Connell's, the bluest eye you can imagine, and long hair "—John Wilson, known the world over as " Christopher North." Dickens gives a wonderful word-picture of him, which is quoted in the pages of Forster. The public dinner of welcome took place on Friday, June 25, with Wilson, *vice* Lord Jeffrey indisposed, occupying the chair. The scene was brilliant, the room crammed, and Dickens met with an enthusiastic reception, which did not, however, scare him out of his self-possession. The toasts entrusted to him were : " Wilson and Scottish Literature," and the " Memory of Wilkie."

He was also accorded the freedom of the city.

On a later day, they drove out to Lord Jeffrey's place, Craig Crook, three miles away ; indeed, their visit to Edinburgh was a whirl of pleasure and triumph, and we hear of Dickens sighing for " Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs, for battledore and shuttlecock."

After Edinburgh, a trip to the Highlands, and " so home."

XIV

AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE

WHEN Dickens was known to be contemplating a trip to America, said Fonblanque: "Why, aren't there disagreeable people enough to describe in Blackburn or Leeds?"

In January, 1842, Mr and Mrs Dickens sailed for America in the good ship *Britannia* of the Cunard Line—Captain Hewett in command—returning in July. It is not within the scope of this work to detail the events of that eventful trip, which have been so well and fully told in the pages of Forster, but rather to take the opportunity of meeting some of Dickens's American friends.

First, Washington Irving, to whom he writes from Washington, on March 21: "Wherever you go, God bless you! What pleasure I have had in seeing you and talking with you, I will not attempt to say. I shall never forget it as long as I live." From New York, Dickens writes to Forster: "Washington Irving is *a great* fellow. We have laughed most heartily together. He is just the man he ought to be." It was in New York the two first met in the flesh, in the spirit and on paper they had met before.

A letter, says Irving in 1841, "from that glorious fellow Dickens (Boz), in reply to the one I wrote, expressing my heartfelt delight with his writings, and my yearnings towards himself. See how completely we sympathize in

feeling : ' My dear Sir, There is no man in the world who could have given me the heart-felt pleasure you have, by your kind note. . . . There is no living writer, and there are very few among the dead, whose approbation I should feel so proud to earn. And with everything you have written upon my shelves, and in my thoughts, and in my heart of hearts, I may honestly and truly say so. If you could know how earnestly I write this, you would be glad to read it—as I hope you will be, faintly guessing at the warmth of the hand I autobiographically hold out to you over the broad Atlantic.

" ' I wish I could find in your welcome letter some hint of an intention to visit England. I can't. I have held it at arm's length, and taken a bird's-eye view of it, after reading it a great many times, but there is no greater encouragement in it this way than in a microscopic inspection. I should love to go with you—as I have gone, God knows how often—into Little Britain, and Eastcheap, and Green Arbour Court, and Westminster Abbey. I should like to travel with you, outside the last of the coaches, down to Bracebridge Hall. It would make my heart glad to compare notes with you about that shabby gentleman in the oilcloth hat and red nose, who sat in the nine-cornered back parlour of the Masons' Arms ; and about Robert Preston, and the tallow-chandler's widow, whose sitting-room is second nature to me ; and all about those delightful places and people that I used to walk about (with) and dream of in the day-time, when a very small and not over-particularly-taken-care-of boy. . . .

" ' I have been so accustomed to associate you with my pleasantest and happiest thoughts, and with my leisure hours, that I rush at once into full confidence with you,

and fall, as it were naturally, and by the very laws of gravity, into your open arms. Questions come thronging to my pen as to the lips of people who meet after long hoping to do so. I don't know what to say first, or what to leave unsaid, and am constantly disposed to break off and tell you again how glad I am this moment has arrived.

"'My dear Washington Irving, I cannot thank you enough for your cordial and generous praise, or tell you what deep and lasting gratification it has given me. I hope to have many letters from you, and to exchange a frequent correspondence. I send this to say so. After the first two or three, I shall settle down into a connected style, and become gradually rational.

"'You know what the feeling is, after having written a letter, sealed it, and sent it off. I shall picture you reading this, and answering it before it has lain one night in the post-office. Ten to one that before the fastest packet could reach New York I shall be writing again.

"'Do you suppose the post-office clerks care to receive letters? I have my doubts. They get into a dreadful habit of indifference. A postman, I imagine, is quite callous. Conceive his delivering one to himself, without being startled by a preliminary double knock!

"'Always your faithful friend,

"'CHARLES DICKENS.'"

In "The Life and Letters of Washington Irving," there is a most interesting account of Dickens, Irving & Co., by Professor Felton, extracted from the speech he made at the Massachusetts Historical Society after the death of Irving. It is worthy of quotation almost in full: "The time when I saw the most of Mr Irving, was the winter of 1842, during the visit of Charles Dickens in

New York. I had known this already distinguished writer in Boston and Cambridge. . . . I renewed my acquaintance with Mr Dickens, often meeting him in the brilliant society which then made New York a most agreeable resort. Halleck, Bryant, Washington Irving, . . . and others scarcely less attractive by their genius, wit, and social graces, constituted a circle not to be surpassed anywhere in the world. I passed much of the time with Mr Irving and Mr Dickens; it was delightful to witness the cordial intercourse of the young man, in the flush and glory of his fervent genius, and his elder compeer, then in the assured possession of immortal renown. Dickens said, in his frank, hearty manner, that from his childhood he had known the works of Irving; and that, before he thought of coming to this country, he had received a letter from him, expressing the delight he felt in reading the story of Little Nell; and from that day they had shaken hands *autographically* across the Atlantic. Great and varied as was the genius of Mr Irving, there was one thing he shrank with a comical terror from attempting, and that was *a dinner speech.*

"A great dinner, however, was to be given to Mr Dickens in New York, as one had already been given in Boston; and it was evident to all that no man but Washington Irving could be thought of to preside. With all his dread of making a speech, he was obliged to obey the universal call, and to accept the painful pre-eminence. I saw him daily during the interval of preparation, either at the lodgings of Dickens, or at dinner or evening parties. . . . At length the long-expected evening arrived; a company of the most eminent persons, from all the professions and every walk of life, were assembled, and Mr Irving took the chair. . . . I had the honour to be placed next

but one to Mr Irving, and the great pleasure of sharing in his conversation. He had brought the manuscript of his speech, and laid it under his plate. 'I shall centainly break down,' he repeated over and over again. At last the moment arrived. Mr Irving rose, and was received with deafening and long-continued applause, which by no means lessened his apprehension. He began in his pleasant voice; got through two or three sentences pretty easily, but in the next hesitated; and, after one or two attempts to go on, gave it up, with a graceful allusion to the tournament, and the troops of knights all armed and eager for the fray; and ended with the toast, 'Charles Dickens, the guest of the nation.' 'There!' said he, as he resumed his seat under a repetition of the applause which had saluted his rising, 'there, I told you I should break down, and I've done it'"

In a letter to Rogers from New York, dated February 3, 1836, Irving writes: "I am building a little cottage on the banks of the Hudson, and hope, in the course of the spring, to have, for the first time in my life, a roof of my own over my head. It stands in the midst of the 'fairy haunts of long lost hours,' in a neighbourhood endeared to me by boyish recollections, and commands one of our magnificent river prospects. I only wish I could have you there as a guest, and show my sense of that kind and long-continued hospitality enjoyed in your classic little mansion in St James's Place."

Thackeray gives this description of a visit paid by him when in New York, in 1855, to Washington Irving: "One day I went out to Yonkers, fifteen miles from here, on the Hudson River, and spent the pleasantest day I have had in the States; drove from the pretty village, a busy, bustling new place lying on the river banks, thrice

as broad as the Rhine, and as picturesque, to Irvingtown, nine miles, where good old Washington Irving lives with two nieces, who tend him most affectionately, in a funny little in-and-out cottage surrounded by a little domain of lawns not so smooth as ours, and woods rather small and scrubby ;—in little bits of small parlours, where we were served with cakes and wine,—with a little study not much bigger than my back room, with old dogs trotting about the premises, with flocks of ducks sailing on the ponds,—a very pleasant, patriarchal life. He is finishing the second volume of a Life of Washington ; he has other two to write ; it's a bold undertaking for a man of seventy-four. I don't know whether the book is good or not ; the man is, and one of the pleasantest things I have noted in American manners is the general respect and affection in which this good old man is held.—He described, however, how a few days or weeks since a stranger came out and introduced himself, woke up good old Irving from a snooze in his arm-chair, sat and talked for half-an-hour, and a few days after appears a long account in the *Herald* of Sunnyside and Mr Irving, and how he slept and looked, and what he talked about, etc., etc.—Isn't it pleasant ? "

A sweet, kindly, homely, lovable man as well as a writer of rare charm and humour. Tom Moore speaks of him as " not strong as a ' lion,' but delightful as a domestic animal."

Of Dickens himself, we may as well take a glimpse. Here is a pen-portrait of him as he sat for his picture to Francis Alexander, a well-known Boston artist : " His long brown hair, slightly curling, sweeps his shoulder, the bright eyes glance, and that inexpressible look of kindly mirth plays round his mouth and shows itself in the arched brow. Alexander caught much of that

singular *lighting up of the face* which Dickens had, beyond anyone I ever saw;" and J. T. Fields says that he "seemed like the Emperor of Cheerfulness on a cruise of pleasure, determined to conquer a realm or two of fun every hour of his overflowing existence."

Indeed, he made a host of good and kind friends, many of whom, as we shall see, afterward came to visit him in England. There was Dana, the author of "Two Years Before the Mast"—a book once much read and well worth the reading—"a very nice fellow indeed," so Dickens wrote, ". . . he is short, mild-looking, and has a careworn face."

At Cambridge University he met many of the professors, who appear to have been goodly company, and not dry-as-dust, as are too many dons. There was Longfellow, whose poetry was almost as popular once upon a time in England as in America; Ticknor; Bancroft, "a famous man; a straightforward, manly, earnest heart." But above all there was Felton, who became to him a very dear friend. He was Professor of Greek at Cambridge, and Dickens found him a man after his own heart, "unaffected, hearty, genial, jolly," adding with quaint insularity, "quite an Englishman of the best sort." He describes a meeting with him on board ship on the way down to New York, having previously made his acquaintance at Boston. They were evidently a hilarious couple, for "we drank all the porter on board, ate all the cold pork and cheese, and were very merry indeed." They were also, at least we will hope so, men of fine digestions.

At New York they were very kindly entreated by their friend David Colden, of whom Dickens writes to Macready that he was a real good fellow, and "I am deeply in love with his wife. Indeed we have received the greatest

and most earnest and zealous kindness from the whole family, and quite love them all."

Sumner, from whom more than one quotation has been given, proved a serviceable friend also. Fitz-Greene Halleck "is a merry little man," as opposed to Bryant, who is melancholy; the painter, Washington Allston, "a glorious old genius"; Henry Clay is "a most *charming* fellow"; on the whole, he seems to have liked very well the men he met. J. T. Fields, the Boston publisher, we will meet again. He was one of the sincerest admirers that Charles Dickens ever had, and he had plenty.

Into Canada, which Mr and Mrs Dickens visited, we need not follow them.

Dickens appears to have been entertained at more than one dinner on his return home, and Hood was one of those who entertained him at Greenwich, and this is the account he gives of the festivity: "The snug one dozen of diners . . . turned out to be above two (in fact twenty-seven)—two others, Talfourd and Macready, being prevented. Jerdan was the *Vice*, and a certain person, not very well adapted to *fill* a Chair, was to have occupied the opposite *Virtue*, but on the score of ill-health I begged off, and Captain Marryat presided instead. On his right Dickens, and Monckton Milnes, the poetical M.P., on his left, Sir John Wilson, T. H., and for my left hand neighbour Dr Elliotson . . . Foster" (? Forster), "Stanfield the painter. Among the rest were Charles and Tom Landseer. Tom two stone deafer than I am, and obliged to carry a tube. Father Prout and Ainsworth; . . . Procter, *alias* Barry Cornwall, and Barham, otherwise Ingoldsby, Cruikshank, and Cattermole, . . . and a Rev. Mr Wilde, who greatly interested Dr Elliotson and myself: a tall,

very earnest-looking man, like your doctor, only with none of his Sweet-William colour, but quite pale ; and the more so for long jet-black locks, either strange natural hair, or an unnatural wig. He was silent till he sang, and then came out such a powerful bass voice, fit for a cathedral organ—to a song of the olden time, that between physiognomy, costume, vox, and words, the impression was quite black-letterish. . . . Well, we drank 'the Boz' with a delectable clatter, which drew from him a good warm-hearted speech. . . . He looked very well. . . . Then we had more songs. Barham chanted a Robin Hood ballad, and Cruikshank sang a burlesque ballad of Lord H——[1] ; and somebody, unknown to me, gave a capital imitation of a French showman. Then we toasted Mrs Boz, and the Chairman, and the Vice, and the Traditional Priest sang the 'Deep Deep Sea', in his deep deep voice ; and then we drank to Procter, who wrote the said song ; . . . . and Ainsworth's, and a Manchester friend of the latter sang a Manchester ditty, so full of trading stuff, that it really seemed to have been not composed, but manufactured. . . . As to myself, I had to make my *second maiden speech*, for Mr Monckton Milnes proposed my health in terms my modesty might allow me to repeat to *you*, but my memory won't. However, I ascribed the toast to my notoriously bad health, and assured them that their wishes had already improved it—that I felt a brisker circulation—a more genial warmth about the heart, and explained that a certain trembling of my hand was not from palsy, or my old ague, but an inclination in my hand to shake itself with everyone present. Whereupon I had to go through the friendly ceremony with as many of the company as were within reach, besides a few more who

[1] Lord Bateman ; surely ?

came express from the other end of the table. *Very* gratifying, wasn't it ? "

With many of the hosts we have already met, but will take this opportunity of glancing at some of the others. William Jerdan was in his day a well-known Scottish journalist, and distinguished himself by being the first to lay hold on the assassin of Spencer Perceval in the House of Commons in 1812 ; he was an antiquary of note, helped to found the Royal Society of Literature, and wrote a somewhat dull "Autobiography". Richard Monckton Milnes, afterward Lord Houghton, lives in literary history as a minor poet of some parts; we meet him later on.

Of Doctor Elliotson, who was a great friend of Thackeray also, and of "Barry Cornwall," we shall see more anon. Though it does not particularly pertain to this place—or at all to the date with which we are dealing—here is another Greenwich dinner: On July 24, 1848, a very pleasant jaunt was made to Greenwich by Macready in company with some American friends, the party being joined in the evening at the Trafalgar by Dickens and his wife, Miss Hogarth, Mrs Macready, Stanfield, Maclise, and one or two others, "and we sat down to one of those peculiar English banquets, a whitebait-dinner. We were all very cheerful—very gay ; all unbent, and without ever forgetting the respect due to each other ; all was mirth unrestrained and delighted gaiety. Songs were sung in rapid succession, and jests flung about from each part of the table. Choruses broke out, and the reins were flung over the necks of the merry set. After 'Auld Lang Syne' sung by all, Catherine" (Mrs Macready) "giving the solos, we returned home in our hired carriage, and an omnibus, hired for the nonce. . . . A very happy day."

XV

DICKENS WITH THE CHILDREN

IT is not only with his grown-up but with his children friends that we must meet Charles Dickens if we are to understand him. No man ever loved children more sincerely, was happier with them, or more intimately sympathized with them. Again and again he shows in his writings his love and understanding of them. To many Little Nell and Paul Dombey make but small appeal; they appear of the lime-light lime-lighty, and it can scarcely be denied that Dickens has somewhat failed in depicting them. He saw them with his mind's eye and heard them with his mind's ear, but he has scarcely succeeded in making them quite real to us of to-day, life-like as we have seen one of them to have been to such men as Landor, Macready, and Lord Jeffrey.

Shortly before his first trip to America, we find him writing a charming letter to his child-friend, Mary Talfourd, who has asked him to dine with her upon her birthday. He replies that unfortunately he cannot do so, he will soon be leaving his own children for six long months, and feels that he must be with them as much as possible. "But although," he writes to her, "I cannot come to see you on that day, you may be sure I shall not forget that it is your birthday, and that I shall drink your health and many happy returns, in a glass of wine, filled as full

as it will hold. And I shall dine at half-past five myself, so that we may both be drinking our wine at the same time; and I shall tell my Mary (for I have got a daughter of that name but she is a very small one as yet) to drink your health too. . . ." [1]

Then what a delightfully whimsical letter is that he wrote in 1838 to an unknown correspondent, a Master Hastings Hughes, concerning "Nicholas Nickleby," about the disposal of the characters in which story the youngster had written to him, the letter reaching Dickens through the hands of "Ingoldsby" Barham; it winds up thus:

"I meant to have written you a long letter, but I cannot write very fast when I like the person I am writing to, because that makes me think about them, and I like you, and so I tell you. Besides, it is just eight o'clock at night, and I always go to bed at eight o'clock, except when it is my birthday, and then I sit up to supper. So I will not say anything more besides this—and that is my love to you and Neptune; and if you will drink my health every Christmas Day I will drink yours—come.

"I am,

"Respected Sir,

"Your affectionate friend."

[1] A list of Dickens's children may prove interesting:
Charles Culliford Boz, b. 1837, d. 1896.
Mary (Mamie), b. 1838, d. (unmarried) 1896.
Kate Macready, b. 1839. Married, i. Charles Allston Collins in 1860, who died in 1873; ii. Charles Edward Perugini.
Walter Landor, b. 1841, d. 1863.
Francis Jeffrey, b. 1844, d. 1886.
Alfred Tennyson, b. 1845.
Sydney Smith Haldimand, b. 1847, d., and buried at sea, 1872.
Henry Fielding, b. 1849. (K.C. in 1892.)
Dora Annie, b. 1850, d. 1851.
Edward Bulwer Lytton (Plorn), b. 1852, d. 1902.

But we shall best learn what he was to children if we look at him with the eyes of one of his own young folk, as we are able to do by means of the very charming reminiscences given us by Miss Mary Dickens, whose nickname in the family was "Mamie," and also, as descriptive she says, "Mild Gloster."

During the trip to America the house in Devonshire Terrace was let, and the children stayed in Osnaburgh Street, near Regent's Park, in the charge of Mr and Mrs Macready, but went back home to welcome the travellers on their return: "It is here that I dimly remember the return of the travellers. One evening, after dark, we were hurried to the gate, a cab was driving up to the door, or, rather, as it would then have been called, a hackney-coach; before it could stop, a figure jumped out, someone lifted me up in their arms, and I was kissing my father through the bars of the gate. *How* all this happened, and why the gate was shut, I am unable to explain. He, no doubt, was in such a state of joy and excitement, that, at sight of us, he just made a rush, and kissed us as he could. Home at last!"

It was while in America that he was asked to write an epitaph for the tomb of a little child; this is what he wrote:

This is the Grave of a Little Child,

WHOM GOD IN HIS GOODNESS CALLED TO A BRIGHT ETERNITY
WHEN HE WAS VERY YOUNG.
HARD AS IT IS FOR HUMAN AFFECTION TO RECONCILE ITSELF TO DEATH
IN ANY SHAPE (AND MOST OF ALL, PERHAPS, AT FIRST IN THIS),
HIS PARENTS CAN EVEN NOW BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE A CONSOLATION
TO THEM THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES,
AND WHEN THEY SHALL HAVE GROWN OLD AND GRAY,
Always to think of him as a Child in Heaven.

"*And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them.*"

When his children were still tiny folk, he would sing to them before they went up to bed all manner of funny songs, the which he would himself enjoy and laugh at as much as any of his small audience. Encores were allowed, especially of one ditty of an old, rheumatic man, who had caught cold in an omnibus, which was sung with a piping voice broken with coughing and sneezing.

He understood their night terrors, the cause of such horrible agony—no weaker word would be strong enough —to so many small ones. He entered heart and soul into all their amusements, their keeping of pet animals—did he not himself keep pet ravens?—and their games. Miss " Mamie " narrates how anxious he was that they should learn to dance well, and how he insisted on her and her sister Katie teaching him and Leech how to dance the polka ; how earnestly he devoted himself to it ; how he would practise gravely by himself in a corner, and how one bitter winter's night he awoke with the fear on him that he had forgotten the step, so jumped out of bed and practised it—" one, two, three ; one, two, three "—to his own whistling and by the dim rays of a rush-light.

He writes to Professor Felton, in 1842, an account of the festivities at Devonshire Terrace on Twelfth Night, his son Charley's birthday ; there was a magic lantern and " divers other tremendous engines of that nature." Forster and he had procured between them the stock-in-trade of a conjuror, and " O my dear eyes, Felton, if you could see me conjuring the company's watches into impossible tea-caddies, and causing pieces of money to fly, and burning pocket-handkerchiefs without hurting 'em, and practising in my own room, without anybody to admire, you would never forget it as long as you live."

Clarkson Stanfield was a "confederate," who always did his part "exactly the wrong way, to the unspeakable delight of all beholders." And, again, to the same friend on January 2, 1844: "Forster is out again; and if he don't go in again, after the manner in which we have been keeping Christmas, he must be very strong indeed. Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blindman's-buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones, never took place in these parts before." Then follows a description of him dancing a country dance with Mrs Macready at a children's party at the actor's house.

Yes, Dickens loved children and won their love.

XVI

BROADSTAIRS

IN August, 1842, the family went down to Broadstairs, which from 1837 to 1847 was his favourite watering-place. When first he went there, it was a little-known and quiet place of retirement, and its peacefulness was delightful to him.

In 1840 he writes to Maclise :

> " My foot is in the house,
> My bath is on the sea,
> And, before I take a souse,
> Here's a single note to thee,"

and then follows an invitation to " come to the bower which is shaded for you in the one-pair front, where no chair or table has four legs of the same length, and where no drawers will open till you have pulled the pegs off, and then they keep open and won't shut again."

But it is to Professor Felton, to whom he wrote some of the most delightful of his letters, that he best described the place : the intense quiet, the splendid sea, the Goodwin Sands and the floating lights thereon, the North Foreland lighthouse, the sands, and the quaint old-fashioned company.

Wherever he went he delighted to surround himself with the best of good company, with his good friends, and few men had more or more sincere friends than he had. In 1840, Maclise and Forster went down to join him there, so as to have the pleasure of posting to London with him by way of Chatham, Rochester, and Cobham. Again,

in August, 1841, he went there, and so on, again and again, faithful to the places he loved as to the friends.

It was "Our English Watering-Place :—

"In the autumn-time of the year, when the great metropolis is so much hotter, so much noisier, so much more dusty or so much more water-carted, so much more crowded, so much more disturbing and distracting in all respects, than it usually is, a quiet sea-beach becomes indeed a blessed spot. Half awake and half asleep, this idle morning in our sunny window on the edge of a chalk-cliff in the old-fashioned watering-place to which we are a faithful resorter, we feel a lazy inclination to sketch its picture. The place seems to respond. Sky, sea, beach, and village, lie as still before us as if they were sitting for a picture. It is dead low-water. A ripple plays among the ripening corn upon the cliff, as if it were faintly trying from recollection to imitate the sea; and the world of butterflies hovering over the crop of radish seed are as restless in their little way as the gulls are in their larger manner when the wind blows. But the ocean lies winking in the sunlight like a drowsy lion—its glassy waters scarcely curve upon the shore—the fishing-boats in the tiny harbour are all stranded in the mud—our two colliers (our watering-place has a maritime trade employing that amount of shipping) have not an inch of water within a quarter of a mile of them, and turn, exhausted, on their sides, like faint fish of an antediluvian species. Rusty cables and chains, ropes and rings, undermost parts of posts and piles and confused timber-defences against the waves, lie strewn about, in a brown litter of tangled sea-weed and fallen cliff which looks as if a family of giants had been making tea here for ages, and had observed an untidy custom of throwing their tea-leaves on the shore."

XVII

CORNWALL AND COMPANY THERE

IN the autumn of 1842, the "Inimitable Boz," Maclise, Forster and Stanfield "tripped" down to Cornwall, and a merry jaunt they made of it. In a letter to Felton, Dickens notes this as taking place just after Longfellow's visit had concluded, concerning which a few words. Two events of this visit seem to have become firmly fixed in Longfellow's memory, one of which was a trip to Rochester, where they had some difficulty, which they boldly surmounted, in visiting the ruins of the castle; the second being what we should now term a slumming expedition into some of the lowest quarters of London.

Of his visit Longfellow wrote, "I passed a very agreeable fortnight with Dickens. His whole household is a delightful one. At his table he brings together artists and authors—such as Cruikshank, a very original genius; Maclise, the painter; Macready, the actor, etc., etc." And of his departure:—"Taking reluctant leave of London, I went by railway to Bath, where I dined with Walter Savage Landor, a rather ferocious critic."

With "the trippers" we are now familiar, with the exception of Clarkson Stanfield. Of the artist friends with whom Dickens was intimate it is probable that he will hold by far the highest place in the history of painting, with the possible exceptions of Wilkie and Landseer, who, once his maudlin semi-human animal

pictures are forgotten, will come by his own again. Stanfield was born at Sunderland in the year 1793, and was, therefore, somewhat older than the other members of the jovial party of which we are writing, but in spirits as youthful and jolly as any of them. From childhood he showed a love of drawing and a love of the sea; in 1808 he entered the merchant service, and four years later was "pressed" for the navy. In 1814 both he and Douglas Jerrold were on board H.M.S. *Namur*, and he painted scenery for a dramatic performance of which the latter was "manager." Incapacitated by an accident he retired from the service, but not altogether from sea-service until 1818, when he obtained work as scene-painter at the Royalty Theatre, in Wellclose Square, London, East, a house much frequented by seafaring men. In 1822, in similar capacity he achieved great success at Drury Lane, at the same time beginning to work at easel pictures, giving up scene-painting in 1834, though, as we shall see, he occasionally practised it to help his friend Dickens and others. For Macready he painted in 1837 a diorama for his pantomime at Covent Garden, and in 1842 the effective scenery for "Acis and Galatea" at Drury Lane. He was for years a regular contributor to the Royal Academy, becoming an Associate in 1832, and an Academician in 1835. In 1847 he settled down at Hampstead at the Green Hill, where he spent many happy and sociable years.

"Clarkson Stanfield lives vividly in our memory," writes Mrs Cowden Clarke, "as we last saw him, when we were in England in 1862, in his pretty garden-surrounded house at Hampstead. He showed us a portfolio of gorgeous sketches made during a tour in Italy, two of which remain especially impressed upon our mind. One was a bit taken

upon Mount Vesuvius about daybreak, with volumes of volcanic smoke rolling from the near crater, touched by the beams of the rising sun; the other was a view of Esa, a picturesque sea-side village perched on the summit of a little rocky hill, bosomed among the olive-clad crags and cliffs of the Cornice road between Nice and Turbia." During his latter years his health was not robust, and he retired somewhat from "sociabilities," dying in 1867. Dickens dubbed him "the soul of frankness, generosity, and simplicity, the most loving and most lovable of men." Dickens writes to Chorley on June 2, 1867, from Gad's Hill: "I saw poor dear Stanfield (on a hint from his eldest son) in a day's interval between two expeditions. It was clear that the shadow of the end had fallen on him. It happened well that I had seen, on a wild day at Tynemouth, a remarkable sea-effect, of which I wrote a description to him, and he kept it under his pillow." "You know Mrs Inchbald's story, Nature and Art?" Hood once wrote, "What a fine edition of Nature and Art is Stanfield."

Dickens and Lemon clasped hands over Stanfield's grave, the first time they had met since Dickens's estrangement from the editor of *Punch*, who had very rightly declined to bring his paper into taking a part in a purely domestic affair of Dickens. Stanfield on his deathbed had begged Dickens to "make it up" with his old friend, and with success.

We must now hark back to the autumn of the year 1842, and the trip to Cornwall, which lasted nearly three weeks: "seriously, I do believe there never was such a trip," writes Dickens to Professor Felton. Cornwall was not in those days as easy of access as it is nowadays; the railway took them down into Devonshire, and then they

proceeded in an open carriage and with the aid of post horses. How old-world it sounds! Sometimes they journeyed on right through the night, for Dickens did not allow the grass to grow beneath his feet, even when holiday making. Dickens set the pace in whatever company he might be; indeed, we can scarcely imagine him ever playing "follow my leader"; he himself was always leader. On this occasion, as he tells us, he was purse-bearer and paymaster, also "regulated the pace" at which the party travelled. Stanfield carried a map and a compass; Forster was baggage-master, and Maclise, not being allotted any particular task, sang songs! "Heavens!" writes Dickens, in the letter already mentioned, "if you could have seen the necks of bottles —distracting in their immense varieties of shape— peering out of the carriage pockets! . . . If you could have seen but one gleam of the bright fires by which we sat in the big rooms of ancient inns at night, until long after the small hours had come and gone, or smelt but one steam of the hot punch (not white, dear Felton, like that amazing compound I sent you a taste of, but a rich, genial, glowing brown) which came in every evening in a huge broad china bowl! I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey. . . . I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way."

They visited Tintagel, the rocky home peopled with memories of King Arthur and his knights; Mount St Michael and the Land's End were other points. Says Forster, in one of the few eloquent passages in his pages: "Land and sea yielded each its marvels to us; but of all the impressions brought away, of which some afterwards took forms as lasting as they could receive from the most

delightful art, I doubt if any were the source of such deep emotion to us all as a sunset we saw at Land's End. Stanfield knew the wonders of the Continent, the glories of Ireland were native to Maclise, I was familiar from boyhood with border and Scottish scenery, and Dickens was fresh from Niagara; but there was something in the sinking of the sun behind the Atlantic that autumn afternoon, as we viewed it together from the top of the rock projecting farthest into the sea, which each in his turn declared to have no parallel in memory."

Among the lasting forms was a sketch of the Logan Stone by Stanfield, with Forster perched atop of it; "as to your clambering," said Maclise to Forster in after years, "don't I know what happened of old? Don't I still see the Logan Stone, and you perched on the giddy top, while we, rocking it on its pivot, shrank from all that lay concealed below . . . do I forget you clambering up the goat-path to King Arthur's castle of Tintagel, when, in my vain wish to follow, I grovelled and clung to the soil like a Caliban, and you, in the manner of a tricksy spirit and stout Ariel, actually danced up and down before me!" Actually?

Maclise painted a picture of the waterfall of St Wighton, to which Forster had guided him, which Dickens under a feigned name bought at the Academy exhibition, knowing that the generous painter, if he knew of his friend's desire to possess it, would insist on making him a present of it. When the artifice was discovered he did so insist, but Dickens, as usual, had his own way. Maclise some four years later "got even" by painting the portrait of Mrs Dickens.

THE LOGAN STONE IN CORNWALL, WITH JOHN FORSTER SEATED ON THE TOP.

From a Sketch by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A.

XVIII

1843

ON February 12 Dickens writes to Forster that having found himself unable to write, he had in despair "started off at half-past two with my pair of petticoats to Richmond," where they dined, the "pair" being Mrs Dickens and her sister Miss Georgina Hogarth, who had become one of his household and who to the hour of his death remained his steadfast, devoted ally. Better friend no man ever had. Another dinner, in May, was that organised by Dickens as a token of regard and esteem to his old friend and fellow-worker John Black, of the *Morning Chronicle*, who had ceased to be editor of the paper for which he had achieved so much. The dinner was at Greenwich, and among the company of good fellows were Thackeray, Macready, Maclise, Sheil, Fonblanque and Forster. It is not surprising that the meeting was a success.

Yet another dinner, at the Star and Garter at Richmond, to wish Godspeed to Macready, who was setting out for America. "We gave him a splendid dinner last Saturday at Richmond," Dickens writes to Felton, "whereat I presided with my accustomed grace. He is one of the noblest fellows in the world, and I would give a great deal that you and I should sit beside each other to see him play Virginius, Lear, or Werner, which I take to be, every way, the greatest piece of exquisite perfection

that his lofty art is capable of attaining . . . You recollect, perhaps, that he was the guardian of our children while we were away. I love him dearly. . . ."

A very different affair was the Star and Garter of yesterday to that of to-day, a humbler but a far happier hostelry to our mind. Fire was its doom. The garden behind it was beautiful, and the small rooms which opened into it were bowered in jasmine, honeysuckle, and roses; the lawns were shaded by magnificent old trees, and at the foot was a fine avenue of limes. On Sunday afternoons and evenings in summer, the garden and hotel would be crowded with revellers, a gathering largely composed of those well known in artistic and literary and Bohemian circles. We obtain countless glimpses of the place in early Victorian novels and memoirs. Here is one taken from Serjeant Ballantine's very amusing "Experiences."

"There was a party I well remember in connection with one of the most delightful days of many that I passed there; it consisted of Balfe the composer, and his surpassingly lovely daughter, whose career was only too short. She was twice married; once to Sir J. Crampton, who I think was our ambassador to the Court of Russia, and afterwards to a grandee of Spain, and died when quite young. Mowbray Morris was another of the group. He was manager of the *Times* newspaper, and with him I was very intimate. . . .

"The fourth of the group in addition to myself was Mr Delane, the editor of the same paper, and upon the shoulders of these two men rested the entire weight of its management. No one could be in the society of the latter gentleman without feeling that he was a man of the age. There was a quiet power in his conversation, his knowledge was very varied, and a vein of agreeable

persiflage adorned and lightened whatever he talked about. The last time I met him was at a dinner party at Dr Quain's, the eminent physician.

" At that time his mind had partially given way under the attacks of incurable disease, and it was painful to witness how occasional were the flashes of an intellect that in former days was wont to shed so bright and lasting a light. On this occasion his brougham came for him at the time it had been his custom to go to the office, and he still had the idea that he was actively engaged, although the real editorship had passed into other hands. It seems so short a time since we five were stretched upon the grass plot in full health and spirits, and now I alone of all that party am left to recall it." This was written in 1898.

With Delane Dickens became very intimate.

The " American Notes " and portions of " Martin Chuzzlewit " had not unnaturally given considerable offence in America, and it was considered wiser that Dickens should not force the fact of his friendship with Macready upon Americans by seeing him off at Liverpool, this being pointed out by Captain Marryat. The doubt had been in Dickens's mind already, and he had discussed it with Mrs Dickens more than once, but a fear lest he should be accused of giving too much importance to his doings withheld him from moving in the matter. But Marryat, also perceiving the danger, determined him. Forster thought otherwise—not the only occasion on which he advised Dickens other than wisely.

On October 2 he was down at Manchester, speaking at the opening of the Athenæum there, among others on the platform being Disraeli and Cobden. He pointed out the help that even a little knowledge could be to men

of humble rank, "watching the stars with Ferguson the shepherd's boy, walking the streets with Crabbe, a poor barber here in Lancashire with Arkwright, a tallow-chandler's son with Franklin, shoe-making with Bloomfield in his garret, following the plough with Burns, and high above the noise of loom and hammer, whispering courage in the ears of workers I could this day name in Sheffield and Manchester."

In an amusing letter to Ainsworth, written a few days later, he gives a truly graphic picture of a cold in the head, caught probably at Liverpool: "I am at this moment deaf in the ears, hoarse in the throat, red in the nose, green in the gills, damp in the eyes, twitchy in the joints, and fractious in the temper. . . . I will make prodigious efforts to get the better of it to-night by resorting to all conceivable remedies, and if I succeed so as to be only negatively disgusting to-morrow, I will joyfully present myself at six, and bring my womankind along with me."

We find him, too, interesting himself keenly in the question of ragged schools, writing to Miss Coutts (afterward the Baroness Burdett Coutts) a stirring account of them, which brought a prompt promise of help from her; "she is a most excellent creature," he writes, "I protest to God, and I have a most perfect affection and respect for her." Indeed, she was his very good friend from the opening days of his career, and did to him and his children many an act of kindness.

In September he wrote to Macvey Napier, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, offering to write upon the education question, to the effect that a system exclusively founded upon Church principles would not do, and that "the Church Catechism is wholly inapplicable to the state of ignorance that now prevails; and why no system

but one, so general in great religious principles as to include all creeds, can meet the wants and understandings of the dangerous classes of society." Had this policy that he then advocated been adopted, how much unhappy and unnecessary controversy would have been saved. This offer of an article was not accepted, as, indeed, he scarcely expected it would be. But so strong were his feelings on the matter, and so keen his differences of opinion with clergymen of the Church of England, that he took seats in the Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel, of which the Rev. Edward Tagart was then minister, an interesting, able man and a good antiquary, his wife an amiable, thoughtful woman.

Toward the end of the year, Dickens's thoughts turned steadily toward foreign travel, chiefly in search of rest; he and all his family; to go to Normandy or Brittany; possibly to walk through Switzerland, France and Italy; to take Mrs Dickens to Rome and Venice; many vague plans crossed his mind; eventually a prolonged stay in Italy was decided upon.

XIX

ITALY

WE purpose to deal somewhat fully with this journey to Italy, because by so doing we shall receive light upon Dickens's character. He has himself told the tale at length in his "Pictures from Italy" and his letters to Forster and other friends, from the first of which we shall quote at some length. The house in Devonshire Terrace was let, and during the two weeks immediately preceding their departure, the family put up in Osnaburgh Terrace. Then a carriage was purchased for forty-five pounds, "as for comfort—let me see—it is about the size of your library"; presumably Forster's; "with night-lamps and day-lamps and pockets and imperials and leathern cellars, and the most extraordinary contrivances. Joking apart, it is a wonderful machine." A wonderful courier he obtained too, one Roche, who, until his death in 1849, was with Dickens on all his foreign travels. Thus Dickens describes him, "the radiant embodiment of good humour . . . in the person of a French courier—best of servants and most beaming of men."

Before deciding on his destination Dickens had written to Lady Blessington asking her advice and telling her that Nice appealed to him as a good place for headquarters, but both she and D'Orsay recommended Pisa, upon which suggestion he did not act.

Of course before setting out a dinner was necessary to make all things regular, and this took place at Greenwich, when Lord Normanby was in the chair, and among others present there had come with Stanfield, J. M. W. Turner, who "had enveloped his throat, that sultry summer day, in a huge red belcher-handkerchief, which nothing would induce him to remove. He was not otherwise demonstrative, but enjoyed himself in a quiet silent way, less perhaps at the speeches than at the changing lights on the river." Carlyle stayed away, protesting that he loved Dickens, but preferred to express his affection otherwise than dining out in the dog days.

The party travelled via Boulogne to Paris; then "on a fine Sunday morning in the Midsummer time and weather of eighteen hundred and forty-four, it was, my good friend, when—don't be alarmed; not when two travellers might have been observed slowly making their way over that picturesque and broken ground by which the first chapter of a Middle-Aged novel is usually attained—but when an English travelling-carriage of considerable proportions, fresh from the shady halls of the Pantechnicon near Belgrave Square, London, was observed (by a very small French soldier; for I saw him look at it) to issue from the gate of the Hôtel Meurice in the Rue Rivoli at Paris."

En route to Sens, to Avallon, to Chalons, to Lyons, to Avignon, to Marseilles. Once more we will take a look at the old-world methods of travelling, uncomfortable enough in many ways, but so inexpressibly superior in that travellers then did really see something of the country and the people:—

"We have four horses, and one postillion, who has a very long whip, and drives his team, something like the

Courier of Saint Petersburg in the circle at Astley's or Franconi's: only he sits his own horse instead of standing on him. The immense jack-boots worn by these postillions, are sometimes a century or two old; and are so ludicrously disproportionate to the wearer's foot, that the spur, which is put where his own heel comes, is generally half-way up the leg of the boots. The man often comes out of the stable-yard, with his whip in his hand and his shoes on, and brings out, in both hands, one boot at a time, which he plants on the ground by the side of his horse, with great gravity, until everything is ready. When it is—and oh Heaven! the noise they make about it!—he gets into the boots, shoes and all, or is hoisted into them by a couple of friends; adjusts the rope harness, embossed by the labours of innumerable pigeons in the stables; makes all the horses kick and plunge; cracks his whip like a madman; shouts 'En route—Hi!' and away we go."

"Then, there is the Diligence, twice or thrice a-day, with the dusty outsides in blue frocks, like butchers; and the insides in white nightcaps; and its cabriolet head on the roof, nodding and shaking, like an idiot's head; and its Young-France passengers staring out of window, with beards down to their waists, and blue spectacles awfully shading their warlike eyes, and very big sticks clenched in their National grasp. Also the Malle Poste, with only a couple of passengers, tearing along at a real good dare-devil pace, and out of sight in no time. Steady old Curés come jolting past, now and then, in such ramshackle, rusty, musty, clattering coaches as no Englishman would believe in; and bony women dawdle about in solitary places, holding cows by ropes while they feed, or digging and hoeing or doing field-work of a more

laborious kind,or representing real shepherdesses with their flocks—to obtain an adequate idea of which pursuit and its followers, in any country, it is only necessary to take any pastoral poem, or picture, and imagine to yourself whatever is most exquisitely and widely unlike the descriptions therein contained."

So runs on the clever delineation of men and manners in France in 1844 as written in the pages of one of Dickens's most delightful works, "Pictures from Italy." We will not track the travellers step by step; at Marseilles they stayed a night and then proceeded by steamer to Genoa, their destination. Of their arrival there and their two miles' drive to Albaro, where a villa had been rented, Dickens gives a highly comical description. He writes like a boy of prodigious observation. "Novelty," he says, "pleasant to most people, is particularly delightful, I think, to me." After a short period of depression caused by the Villa Bagnerello, or "the Pink Jail," being a somewhat dilapidated and depressing residence, he settled down to keen enjoyment of the new life, into which he plunged with the thoroughness that he displayed in all his undertakings.

As an example of the minuteness of his observation even of places that he merely glanced at, take this description of a fountain in a courtyard behind a palace in Genoa:—

"You stand in a yard (the yard of the same house) which seems to have been unvisited by human foot for a hundred years. Not a sound disturbs its repose. Not a head, thrust out of any of the grim, dark, jealous windows, within sight, makes the weeds in the cracked pavement faint of heart, by suggesting the possibility of there being hands to grub them up. Opposite to you,

is a giant figure carved in stone, reclining, with an urn, upon a lofty piece of artificial rockwork ; and out of the urn dangles the fag end of a leaden pipe, which, once upon a time, poured a small torrent down the rocks. But the eye-sockets of the giant are not drier than this channel is now. He seems to have given his urn, which is nearly upside down, a final tilt ; and after crying, like a sepulchral child, ' All gone ! ' to have lapsed into a stony silence."

Indeed, it might justly be questioned if ever there were another so greatly gifted with powers of observation as was Dickens. He shows it throughout all his work ; and the more we know of his life the more we can understand and appreciate the excellence of his art as a descriptive writer. It is well to remember that imagination is not creation but utilisation and adaptation of things seen and known. Unfortunately most of us see and know so little. Again and again, too, does he in his letters as in his fiction give a quaint touch of humanity to stocks and stones. He—in the case above quoted—almost succeeds in making us feel a pity for this lonely, forgotten giant and his empty urn. These thoughts were undoubtedly the inspiration of the moment, the outcome of his whimsical turn of mind, not laboured fun-making or deliberate picture-painting. He says this himself, when writing of the amphitheatre at Verona :—

" When I had traversed all about it, with great interest, and had gone up to the topmost round of seats, and turning from the lovely panorama closed in by the distant Alps, looked down into the building, it seemed to lie before me like the inside of a prodigious hat of plaited straw, with an enormously broad brim and a shallow crown ; the plaits being represented by the four-and-

forty rows of seats. The comparison is a homely and fantastic one, in sober remembrance and on paper, but it was irresistibly suggested at the moment, nevertheless."

He was at his best when whimsical; still at Verona:—

"I read Romeo and Juliet in my own room at the inn that night—of course, no Englishman had ever read it there, before—and set out for Mantua next day at sunrise, repeating to myself (in the *coupé* of an omnibus, and next to the conductor, who was reading the Mysteries of Paris),

> There is no world without Verona's walls,
> But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
> Hence-banished is banished from the world,
> And world's exile is death——

which reminded me that Romeo was only banished five-and-twenty miles after all, and rather disturbed my confidence in his energy and boldness"; and at his worst, a bad worst, when he indulges in moralising, none of the freshest or most profound, or expressed in language free from tawdriness. Dickens was a humourist, thank Heaven for it; as with Sterne, his pathos too often became bathos.

In October he moved from the depressing "Pink Jail" to the Palazzo Peschiere, better both as to accommodation and situation.

From a delightful letter, written to Maclise, we must make one brief quotation, "green figs I have already learned to like. Green almonds (we have them at dessert every day) are the most delicious fruit in the world. And green lemons, combined with some rare hollands that is to be got here, make prodigious punch, I assure you." And this from a letter to Stanfield:—"I love you so truly, and have such pride and joy of heart in your friendship, that I don't know how to begin writing to you.

When I think how you are walking up and down London in that portly surtout, and can't receive proposals from Dick [1] to go to the theatre, I fall into a state between laughing and crying, and want some friendly back to smite. 'Je-im!' 'Aye, aye, your honour,' is in my ears every time I walk upon the seashore here; and the number of expeditions I make into Cornwall in my sleep, the springs of Flys I break, the songs I sing, and the bowls of punch I drink, would soften a heart of stone." Did ever any other man possess such overflowing good spirits?

There does not seem to have been anything that delighted him more keenly than to be in close touch with his friends:—"You told me it was possible," we have him writing to Mr Tagart, "that you and Mrs Tagart might wander into these latitudes in the autumn. I wish you would carry out that infant intention to the utmost. It would afford us the truest delight and pleasure to receive you. If you come in October, you will find us in the Palazzo Peschiere, in Genoa, which is surrounded by a delicious garden, and is a most charming habitation in all respects."

In Genoa, as elsewhere, when at work he sadly missed the turmoil of London; his pen drags:—"Put me down on Waterloo Bridge," he writes to Forster, while he is hard at "The Chimes," "at eight o'clock in the evening, with leave to roam about as long as I like, and I would come home as you know, panting to go on. I am sadly strange as it is, and can't settle." When the book was finished, Dickens made holiday, touring by himself—though, of course, escorted by Roche—through Ferrara, Parma, Modena, Bologna, Verona, Mantua, Venice

[1] A nickname for himself.

DICKENS READING "THE CHIMES."

From the Sketch by D. Maclise, R.A.

and other places of which he has given his "impressions"

From Milan, on November 18, he writes to Forster, "My design is, to walk into Cuttris's coffee-room [1] on Sunday the 1st December, in good time for dinner . . . and when I meet you—oh Heaven! what a week we will have." He was better than his word, arriving a day earlier, rushing at once to meet Maclise and Forster—we can imagine the uproarious greetings! The motive of this brief visit to London is to be found in a letter to Douglas Jerrold from Cremona on October 16, "Forster has told you," he writes, "or will tell you, that I very much wish you to hear my little Christmas book; and I hope you will meet me, at his bidding, in Lincoln's Inn Fields," and in one to Forster of earlier date:—"I know you have consented to the party. Let me see. Don't have anyone, this particular night, to dinner, but let it be a summons for the special purpose at half-past 6. Carlyle, indispensable, and I should like his wife of all things: *her* judgment would be invaluable. You will ask Mac, and why not his sister? Stanny and Jerrold I should particularly wish; Edwin Landseer; Blanchard; perhaps Harness; and what say you to Fonblanque and Fox? . . . And when I meet you (in sound health I hope) oh Heaven! what a week we will have."

On Monday, December 2, the party assembled: Carlyle, Stanfield, Laman Blanchard, Douglas Jerrold, Frederick Dickens, Charles's brother, W. J. Fox, Unitarian minister, journalist, free-trader and M.P., Alexander Dyce, the Shakespearean scholar, Maclise, and William Harness, another good Shakespearean.

It was of Blanchard that Jerrold said, referring to his

[1] The Piazza Hotel, Covent Garden.

fondness for society, " He to *parties* gave up what was meant for mankind."

So successful was the reading that at " Ingoldsby " Barham's request a second took place; in Barham's diary we read, " December 5, 1844.—Dined with Charles Dickens, Stanfield, Maclise and Albany Fonblanque at Forster's. Dickens read with remarkable effect his Christmas story, *The Chimes*, from the proofs."

Dickens was delighted, " I swear I wouldn't have missed that week, that first night of our meeting, that one evening of the reading at your rooms," he said to Forster, " aye, and the second reading too, for any easily stated or conceived consideration."

Apparently he dined at Gore House the very day of the reading, but surely this must have been a slip of his pen when writing to Mrs Dickens ?

On his way back to Italy he stayed at Paris to meet Macready, who was acting there. We gain a peep at his views on the subject of opera in a letter to Forster: he heard Grisi in *Il Pirato*, " the passion and fire of a scene between her, Mario, and Fornasari was as good and great as it is possible for anything operatic to be." He read " The Chimes " to Macready, and in a letter to Mrs Dickens thus records the effect, " If you had seen Macready last night, undisguisedly sobbing and crying on the sofa as I read, you would have felt, as I did, what a thing it is to have power."

Before the end of the year he was settled down again in Genoa; in January he started Southward on a tour with Mrs Dickens, which included Rome and the Carnival, of which he gives so bright and vivid a description in the " Pictures," and then in June—good-bye to Italy. In a letter to Lady Blessington, dated May 9, he says, " I

write you my last Italian letter for this bout, designing to leave here, please God, on the ninth of next month, and to be in London again by the end of June. I am looking forward with great delight to the pleasure of seeing you once more, and mean to come to Gore House with such a swoop as shall astonish the poodle, if, after being accustomed to his own size and sense, he retain the power of being astonished at anything in the wide world."

The return journey was made by the Great St Gothard, of the crossing by which pass Dickens gives a truly thrilling description in a letter to Forster. The party was met at Brussels by Maclise, Jerrold and the aforesaid Forster, a week of fun and frolic was spent in Belgium, and so home by the end of June.

XX

1845-6

THE two most important events—for our purpose—during the latter part of the year 1845 and the earlier of 1846 are the one connected with amateur theatricals and the other with very practical and at the same time impractical journalism.

The notion of an amateur performance had some time since been mooted, and, working with his wonted energy, within three weeks after his return to town the play had been chosen and cast, and negotiations entered upon for a playhouse. The upshot was detailed in a letter to George Cattermole, who was asked to but did not take the part of Downright in Ben Jonson's "Every Man in His Humour." The date fixed for the performance was September 21, the place Miss Kelly's Theatre, in Dean Street, Soho, now known as the Royalty; the occasion strictly private, that is to say, the audience was invited, each member of the cast being allotted from thirty to thirty-five cards; Stanfield was to have been Downright, indeed, rehearsed the part twice, but threw it up finding his time fully occupied with the scenery; Dickens was Bobadil; Jerrold, Master Stephen; Mark Lemon, Brainworm; Leech, Master Matthew; Forster, Kitely. The performance was so triumphant a success that it was repeated some weeks later for a charity; and before the year closed a performance was given of another Elizabethan

masterpiece, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Elder Brother." Dickens's gifts as an actor and stage-manager it will be more convenient to discuss later on in connection with more public performances. After the "show" there was to be a little supper, writes Dickens to Macready, "at No. 9, Powis Place, Great Ormond Street, in an empty house belonging to one of the company. There I am requested by my fellows to beg the favour of thy company and that of Mrs Macready. The guests are limited to the actors and their ladies—with the exception of yourselves, and D'Orsay, and George Cattermole, 'or so'—that sounds like Bodadil a little."

Undertaking the editorship of the *Daily News* was one of the few bad blunders, if not the one, that Dickens made in his business life, which might have been avoided, indeed, if he had taken the advice urged upon him by Forster, who very rightly held that Dickens was by temperament unsuited for grappling with the peculiarly harassing duties of the editor of a daily newspaper. Forster knew well how great the cost was to Dickens of work that seemed so spontaneous and so facilely produced, knew also that his health was not so robust as his habits of life would appear to show. Also, what could Dickens gain either in fame or the good-will of the public by success in his new walk of life? There was indeed everything to lose and not anything to gain. However, Dickens had made up his mind to the undertaking.

The work was indeed harassing:—

On January 21, he writes to Forster, before going home at six o'clock in the morning, "been at press three-quarters of an hour, and were out before the *Times*."

On the same day to W. J. Fox, who had undertaken to write some of the political articles:—"The boy is

waiting. I need not tell you how our Printer failed us last night. I hope for better things to-night, and am bent on a fight for it. If we can get a good paper to-morrow, I believe we are as safe as such a thing can be."

On February 9, to Forster he writes to say that he is tired and worn out, having already hinted that it was in his mind to throw up the work and to go abroad once again; in little over four months from the starting of the paper Dickens's connection with it had entirely ceased. The decision to sever himself from it appears to have been arrived at in conversation with Forster during a two days' visit to Rochester on his birthday, he, Mrs Dickens, Miss Hogarth, Maclise, Forster and Jerrold making up the party. Visits were paid to the Castle, to Watt's Charity, the Chatham lines, Cobham Church and Cobham Park, the while they put up at the Bull Inn, which still glories in the names of Dickens and Pickwick.

XXI

SWITZERLAND

AFTER dining with Forster on May 30, " Mr and Mrs Charles Dickens and Family " left England on the following day *en route* for Switzerland, travelling via Ostend, Verviers, Coblentz, Mayence, Mannheim, Strasburg, Bâle, so to Lausanne ; accompanied, or rather conducted, by the indefatigable Roche. From our point of view this visit to Switzerland, which lasted until late in the autumn, is chiefly notable in that during it he made some lasting and true friends. But before introducing ourselves to some of these, we may touch upon one or two minor incidents, which help in one way or another to throw light upon his character. For a full account of this stay in Switzerland—as of many other matters which we merely touch upon or entirely neglect—recourse must be had to Forster's " Life " and to the three volumes of " Letters," these latter being by no means so well known as they should be ; as we have said before, Dickens was among the master men of " Letters."

His hatred and misunderstanding of other days and other ways is well shown in a description he gives of a visit he paid in August to Chillon ; " there is a court-yard inside ; surrounded by prisons, oubliettes, and old chambers of torture ; so terrifically sad, that death itself is not more sorrowful. And oh ! a wicked old Grand

Duke's bedchamber upstairs in the tower, with a secret staircase down into the chapel where the bats were wheeling about; and Bonnivard's dungeon; and a horrible trap whence prisoners were cast out into the lake; and a stake all burnt and crackled up, that still stands in the torture ante-chamber to the saloon of justice (!)—what tremendous places! Good God, the greatest mystery in all the earth, to me, is how or why the world was tolerated by its Creator through the good old times, and wasn't dashed to fragments." It is strange that with his intimate knowledge of the horrors of London and his passionate love for and sympathy with the poor and oppressed he did not realise that our ways to-day are other ways, but in the sum of suffering caused by them by no means better ways. Again, commenting upon the revolution that had upset the Swiss government, he says, " they are a genuine people, these Swiss. There is better metal in them than in all the stars and stripes of all the fustian banners of the so-called, and falsely-called, U-nited States. They are a thorn in the sides of European despots, and a good wholesome people to live near Jesuit-ridden Kings on the brighter side of the mountains." This is quite high-class demagoguese. Later on he says that he believes " the dissemination of Catholicity to be the most horrible means of political and social degradation left in the world."

Now to hark back to the commencement of the visit, from the very beginning of which he was fortunate in the matter of making of friends. Among the earliest with whom he became acquainted, the acquaintance rapidly growing into sincere friendship, were Mrs Jane Marcet, a Swiss lady, married to the distinguished chemist, Alexander John Gaspard Marcet, and a writer herself of

popular scientific works for the young ; her maiden name was Haldimand: and William Haldimand, her brother. He was born in 1784, the son of a London merchant, Anthony Francis Haldimand, and was an excellent man of business, becoming a director of the Bank of England when only twenty-five. In 1820 he was elected M.P. for Ipswich, but in 1828 settled at Lausanne in his villa, Denanton. He was among the most ardent supporters of the cause of Greek Independence, guaranteeing Admiral Cochrane £20,000 toward the equipment of a fleet. Toward the founding of a hospital for the blind at Lausanne he subscribed £24,000, and his other charitable gifts were large.

Dickens says of him with amusing extravagance—"He has founded and endowed all sorts of hospitals and institutions here," going on to say that he is hospitably giving a dinner to introduce "our neighbours, whoever they are." To him and to a Swiss friend, M. de Cerjat, Dickens wrote many of his most delightful letters. Of the rest of the circle we need only name the Hon. Richard and Mrs Watson of Rockingham Castle. Mrs Watson was the daughter of Lord George Quin, who married Lady Georgiana Spencer, and Mr Watson was the fourth son of the second Lord Sondes. Rockingham Castle was situated upon one of the few hills to be found in the county of Northampton ; a fine old pile that had once upon a time been a Royal hunting-lodge and stood in the midst of a well-wooded park. A portion of the house dated back as far as King Stephen. In the great Hall, on one of the beams, was a quaint inscription,

"THYS HOUSE SHALL BE PRESERVED AND NEVER SHALL DECAYE WHILE ALMIGHTY GOD IS HONOURED AND SERVED DAYE BY DAYE."

We will here take a peep into the future, first quoting

what Dickens has to say of his friends :—" He is a very intelligent agreeable fellow, the said Watson by-the-bye ; he sat for Northamptonshire in the Reform Bill time, and is high sheriff of his county and all the rest of it ; but has not the least nonsense about him, and is a thorough good liberal. He has a charming wife."

In 1849 we find Dickens paying the Watsons a visit at Rockingham, and he writes thence on November 30 a quaint account of the old place.

Miss Mary Boyle first met Dickens when on a visit to Rockingham. Mrs Watson was a relative of hers, though not very near, and knowing that she much desired to meet " Boz," asked her down to do so, naming a certain day and train and bidding her look out for the Dickens family at Euston. It was not, however, until the train had reached Wolverton that they met ; then the guard flung open the door of her carriage and announced, " This is Mr Charles Dickens, who is enquiring for Miss Boyle."

She was an enthusiastic amateur actress ; what more natural than that she and Dickens should at once join forces and play the mad gentleman scenes from " Nicholas Nickleby " for the benefit of the house party ? In the dining-room, a beautiful apartment, panelled in oak, and adorned with numerous heraldic shields, the " theatre " was erected on this occasion.

Mr Watson died in 1852, to the great grief of Dickens, who had felt for him a sincere affection :—" I loved him as my heart, and cannot think of him without tears," and again, " I loved him very much, and God knows he deserved it." Dickens wrote to the widow one of the truest, most tender letters of sympathy and consolation that man ever penned. It would be a profanity to quote from it ; it should be read in its entirety.

Both as regards time and place we have gone far astray from Switzerland, to which we will now return, but only for a brief space, as it is by no means our intention to follow his footsteps at all closely.

One of the many trips that he made was especially interesting and enjoyable; the company, Mr and Mrs Dickens, Miss Hogarth, Mr Haldimand, M. and Mdme. de Cerjat and their daughter, Mr and Mrs Watson and some others; destination, the Great St Bernard monastery; a jolly, merry party. The holy fathers Dickens held to be "a piece of sheer humbug." Writing to Mrs Watson on October 7, 1856, and referring to a chapter in "Little Dorrit" in which the family of that name visits the Great St Bernard, he says, "I *did* write it for you; and I hoped in writing it, that you would think so. All those remembrances are fresh in my mind, as they often are, and gave me an extraordinary interest in recalling the past. I should have been grievously disappointed if you had not been pleased, for I took aim at you with a most determined intention."

On Monday, November 16, they started for Paris:— "I don't believe there are many dots on the map of the world where we shall have left such affectionate remembrances behind us, as in Lausanne. It was quite miserable this last night, when we left them at Haldimand's."

So by post to Paris, where they arrived on the 20th, with "several tons of luggage, other tons of servants, and other tons of children."

XXII

PARIS

WE shall be with Dickens in Paris again later on, and will make excuse of this three months' visit chiefly to show Dickens as an affectionate brother. His eldest sister, Fanny, was born at Portsea, in 1810, two years before her famous brother. She became a pupil at the Royal Academy of Music, in Tenterden Street, and during one of the saddest periods of his sad childhood Dickens went to see her receive a prize there :— "I could not bear to think of myself—beyond the reach of all such honourable emulation and success. The tears ran down my face. I felt as if my heart were rent. I prayed, when I went to bed that night, to be lifted out of the humiliation and neglect in which I was. I never had suffered so much before. There was no envy in this." It was while at Paris that he received disquieting news concerning the health of his sister—now Mrs Burnett—her husband was also a musician—which caused him grave disquietude. She had broken down while at a party at Manchester, and the doctor reported that her lungs were seriously affected. There had previously been fears, but Mrs Dickens had taken her to Doctor Elliotson, who had then given a favourable verdict. Dickens now suggested that she should see him again, and the sentence this time was practically one of death ; her health completely broke down. In the early days

of July, 1848, Dickens wrote to Forster telling him that the end had come.

Of the good doctor we must say a word or two. John Elliotson was born in 1791, the son of a chemist, and was educated at Edinburgh, and Jesus College, Cambridge, afterward " walking " St Thomas's and Guy's hospitals. Among his eccentricities, which were many, may be mentioned that he was one of the first of modern Englishmen to wear a beard. His lectures as Professor of the Practice of Medicine at London University were highly popular, and he was one of the most energetic promoters of University College Hospital. In time he became a student of mesmerism, which brought him into conflict with the medical profession, and greatly interested Dickens. But it is not to our purpose to follow his career, distinguished in many ways, as a physician. He was the friend of Thackeray, who dedicated " Pendennis " to him, and of Dickens.

Elliotson and Dickens were joint benefactors to one John Overs, a carpenter, who was stricken with consumption, dying in 1844. He had some small literary talent, and when disease incapacitated him from work, some of his stories were published by T. C. Newby, with an introduction by Dickens, under the title " Evenings of a Working Man," and dedicated to Elliotson, of whom Forster says :— " whose name was for nearly thirty years a synonym with us all for unwearied, self-sacrificing, beneficent service to everyone in need." Miss Coutts (as she then was) appears prettily in the same connection. Dickens wrote on behalf of the widow to thank Miss Coutts for her generous help in money and for having obtained admission to an orphanage for one of the children ; the reply came, " what is the use of my means but to try and do some good with them ? "

Dickens paid a flying visit of eight days to London, chiefly on business intent, and Forster went over to Paris early in 1847 for a fortnight of riotous and vehement sight-seeing, Dickens showing his usual thoughtfulness for a friend's comfort by arranging every detail of his journey, even to the ordering of his dinner at Boulogne at the Hôtel des Bains and the taking a place for him in the *malle-poste.* At Paris, they went to palaces, theatres, hospitals, says Forster, as well as to all the more usual "sights." They were made free of the green-room at the Français by Regnier, one of the closest of Dickens's many actor friends; they were present at a lesson given by Samson at the Conservatoire; saw various plays, including "Clarisse Harlowe," in which the acting of Rose Cheri greatly impressed them by its pathos; supped with the splendid Alexandre Dumas and with Eugene Sue. Lamartine, Théophile Gautier, Scribe, Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo were among other famous men they met. Forster gives a striking description of the last-named, in his home in the Place Royale, with its gorgeous decorations. He depicts him as "rather under the middle size, of compact close-buttoned-up figure, with ample dark hair falling loosely over his close-shaven face, I never saw upon any features so keenly intellectual such a soft and sweet gentility, and certainly never heard the French language spoken with the picturesque distinctness given to it by Victor Hugo."

The stay at Paris was cut short by the illness of Dickens's eldest son, who was then at King's College School, with scarlet fever, and Mr and Mrs Dickens at once returned to London, but owing to the infectious nature of the disease did not see their son for some weeks. The boy had been nursed in lodgings in Albany Street by his

grandmother, Mrs Hogarth, and an amusing story—worth repeating—is told of a charwoman who inquired if the patient was the son of the author of " Dombey and Son." On hearing this was so, she exclaimed, " Lawk, ma'am ! I thought that three or four men must have put together *Dombey* ! "

XXIII

ON TOUR

NO attempt is made in this rambling record to adopt any strict order of dates. This chapter will be devoted to tours made by Dickens and a Company of Amateur Actors through the provinces, which have been aptly designated by Maclise as "splendid strolling." Dickens loved the theatre and all connected with it, and several actors were amongst his closest friends. It was by the merest freak of fate that he did not become a professional actor. As a young man, he was an enthusiastic playgoer, and studied various parts himself. Then he determined to try his fortune upon the boards, writing to George Bartley, the comedian and stage-manager at Covent Garden Theatre, describing what powers he believed himself to possess, and asking for an interview. Bartley responded, and a date was fixed for a visit, at which the aspirant's powers were to be tested before no less a person than Charles Kemble. The day arrived, but Dickens was prostrated with a cold. The visit was postponed until the next season, but in the meanwhile the beginnings of a journalistic success had been made and the matter was not reopened.

In 1847 it was proposed to give some representations of "Every Man in His Humour" on behalf of Leigh Hunt, who was in financial difficulties, and to this motive was added the relieving of the pecuniary necessities of John Poole, the dramatic author.

Some letters of Dickens's in June and July set forth fairly fully the aims of the performances and the constitution of the cast. They are written to Mr Alexander Ireland, a Scotchman who had settled in Manchester, being the publisher and business manager of the *Examiner* there. He is best remembered as the author of "The Book-Lover's Enchiridion." Manchester was one of the towns it was proposed to visit, and Dickens wrote to Ireland, having heard from a common friend that he was interested in all that concerned Leigh Hunt.

Of this charming writer we do not propose to say much. James Henry Leigh Hunt was born in the year 1784, and was educated at Christ's Hospital, now as far as concerns London, alas, no more; it was a place of many happy literary ghosts. To every kind of journalism he turned his graceful pen, he was essayist and also poet, but little of his writing has stood the cruel test of time. There is scarce one work of his which to-day has many readers except among students of literature, perhaps the most generally popular book of his being "The Town," a delightful volume to all lovers of London. Among other of his writings may be named "The Story of Rimini"; "Lord Byron and some of His Contemporaries"; "A Legend of Florence," produced at Covent Garden in 1840; an "Autobiography," which is very disappointing, and "An Old Court Suburb." His chief claim to fame is that he was the friend of Lamb, Moore, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and—for our purpose—of Charles Dickens. He died in 1859 and was buried at Kensal Green. Of his style of prose writing we may gain some hint from an excerpt from his "Autobiography," dealing with his school-days:—

"Christ-Hospital (for such is its proper name, and not

Christ's Hospital) occupies a considerable portion of ground between Newgate Street, Giltspur Street, St Bartholomew's, and Little Britain. There is a quadrangle with cloisters; and the Square inside the cloisters is called the Garden, and most likely was the monastery garden. Its only delicious crop for many years has been pavement. Another large area, presenting the Grammar and Navigation Schools, is also misnamed the Ditch; the town ditch having formerly run that way. In Newgate Street is seen the hall, or eating-room, one of the noblest in England, adorned with enormously long paintings by Verrio and others, and with an organ. A portion of the old quadrangle once contained the library of the monks, and was built or repaired by the famous Whittington, whose arms were to be seen outside; but alterations of late years have done it away. Our routine of life was this. We rose to the call of a bell at six in summer, and seven in winter; and after combing ourselves, and washing our hands and face, we went at the call of another bell to breakfast. All this took up about an hour. From breakfast we proceeded to school, where we remained till eleven, winter and summer, and then had an hour's play. Dinner took place at twelve. Afterwards was a little play till one, when we went again to school, and remained till five in summer, and four in winter. At six was the supper. We used to play after it in summer till eight. On Sundays, the school time of other days was occupied in church, both morning and evening; and as the Bible was read to us every day before every meal, besides prayers and grace, we rivalled the monks in the religious part of our duties."

At the man himself we may profitably take a few peeps. In 1834 he was living at 4 Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea,

with Carlyle as near neighbour, who thus describes Hunt and his surroundings :—

" Hunt's household. Nondescript ! Unutterable ! Mrs Hunt asleep on cushions ; four or five beautiful, strange, gipsy-looking children running about in undress, whom the lady ordered to get us tea. The eldest boy, Percy,—a sallow, black-haired youth of sixteen, with a kind of dark cotton nightgown on,—went whirling about like a familiar, pervading everything ; an indescribable dreamlike household. . . . Hunt's house excels all you have ever read of,—a poetical Tinkerdom, without parallel even in literature. In his family room, where are a sickly large wife and a whole school of well-conditioned wild children, you will find half a dozen old rickety chairs gathered from half a dozen different hucksters, and all seeming engaged, and just pausing, in a violent horn-pipe. On these and around them and over the dusty table and ragged carpet lie all kinds of litter,—books, paper, egg-shells, scissors, and, last night when I was there, the torn heart of a half-quarter loaf. His own room above stairs, into which alone I strive to enter, he keeps cleaner. It has only two chairs, a bookcase, and a writing-table ; yet the noble Hunt receives you in his Tinkerdom in the spirit of a king, apologizes for nothing, places you in the best seat, takes a window-sill himself if there is no other, and then, folding closer his loose flowing ' muslin cloud ' of a printed night-gown, in which he always writes, commences the liveliest dialogue on philosophy and the prospects of man (who is to be beyond measure happy yet) ; which again he will courteously terminate the moment you are bound to go ; a most interesting, pitiable, lovable man, to be used kindly but with discretion."

In 1839 Sumner speaks of him as " truly brilliant in

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conversation . . . he is of about the middle size, with iron-gray hair parted in the middle, and suffered to grow quite long."

Mrs Cowden Clarke gives us a pleasant peep at Leigh Hunt; she was introduced to him at a party, where he sang a cheery nautical song in his sweet though small baritone. "His manner—fascinating, animated, full of cordial amenity, and winning to a degree of which I have never seen the parallel—drew me to him at once." And J. T. Fields in his diary writes:—*June* 30, 1859.—"Drove to Hammersmith, where we found Leigh Hunt and his two daughters awaiting us. It was a very tiny cottage, with white curtains and flowers in the window; but his beautiful manner made it a rich abode. The dear old man talked delightfully about his flowers, calling them 'gentle household pets.'"

More or less disguised both Landor and Leigh Hunt figure in "Bleak House," the former as Lawrence Boythorn, the latter as Harold Skimpole. Landor is said to have been rather proud of his portrait; not inexcusably Leigh Hunt was not so. Wilkie Collins made the following note in his copy of Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens," "At Dickens's own house, when Leigh Hunt was one of his guests at dinner on that occasion, Hunt directly charged Dickens with taking the character of Harold Skimpole from the character of Leigh Hunt, and protested strongly. I was not present, but Dickens told me what had happened." Forster's verdict on Dickens was that "he erred from thoughtlessness only," but both "Barry Cornwall" and Forster himself protested and urged Dickens to alter the likeness, who wrote to the latter, "You will see from the enclosed that Procter is much of my mind. I will nevertheless go through the character again in the

course of this afternoon, and soften down words here and there," but after a second note from Procter further changes were made. In an article, " Leigh Hunt, a Remonstrance," published in " All The Year Round," in 1859, Dickens wrote :—

" The fact is this : exactly those graces and charms of manner which are remembered in the words we have quoted were remembered by the author of the work of fiction in question when he drew the character in question. Above all other things, that ' sort of gay and ostentatious wilfulness ' in the humouring of a subject, which had many times delighted him, and impressed him as being unspeakably whimsical and attractive, was the airy quality he wanted for the man he had invented. Partly for this reason, and partly (he has since often grieved to think) for the pleasure it afforded him to find that delightful manner reproducing itself under his hand, he yielded to the temptation of too often making the character *speak* like his old friend. He no more thought, God forgive him ! that the admired original would ever be charged with the imaginary vices of the fictitious creature than he has himself ever thought of charging the blood of Desdemona and Othello on the innocent Academy model who sat for Iago's leg in the picture. Even as to the mere occasional manner, he meant to be so cautious and conscientious that he privately referred the two proof-sheets of the first number of that book to two intimate literary friends of Leigh Hunt, and altered the whole of that part of the text on their discovering too strong a resemblance to his ' way.' "

In one of the above-mentioned letters to Ireland, Dickens makes mention of the other beneficiary :— " there is no objection to its being known that this is

Mr Poole, the author of ' Paul Pry ' and ' Little Peddlington ' and many comic pieces of great merit, and whose farce of ' Turning the Tables ' we mean to finish with in Manchester. Beyond what he will get from these benefits, he has no resource in this wild world, *I know*." Not only did the dramatist gain relief from these benefits, but later on, and largely through Dickens's efforts, obtained a Civil List pension. He was born in about 1785 and lived on until 1872. Though his plays cannot be said to have held the stage, he has created one immortal figure in " Paul Pry." He was a bit of a wag in his way, as is evidenced by a quaint saying of his at a dinner where the host was grumbling because he could not find any stuffing in the leg of pork he was carving :—" Perhaps," said Poole, " it is in the other leg." But like many another wag he did not highly relish any joke the edge of which was turned against himself.

Writing on October 8, 1862, to Wilkie Collins, Dickens said :—

" I saw Poole (for my sins) last Saturday, and he *was* a sight. He had got out of bed to receive me (at 3 P.M.) and tried to look as if he had been up at Dawn—with a dirty and obviously warm impression of himself on the bedclothes. It was a tent bedstead with four wholly unaccounted for and bare poles, each with an immense spike on the top, like four lightning conductors. He had a fortnight's grey beard, and had made a lot of the most extraordinary memoranda of questions to ask me—which he couldn't read—through an eyeglass which he couldn't hold. He was continually beset with a notion that his landlady was listening outside the door, and was continually getting up from a kind of ironing-board at which he sat, with the intention of darting at the door, but in-

variably missed his aim, and brought himself up by the forehead against blind corners of the wall." And to Macready in April, 1865, "Poole still holds out at Kentish Town, and says he is dying of solitude. His memory is astoundingly good. I see him about once in two or three months, and in the meantime he makes notes of questions to ask me when I come. Having fallen in arrear of the time, these generally refer to unknown words he has encountered in the newspapers. His last three (he always reads them with tremendous difficulty through an enormous magnifying glass) were as follows:—

1. What's croquet?
2. What's an albert chain?
3. Let me know the state of mind of the queen."

Returning to the Ireland letters, we may quote what description Dickens gave of the company:—"Jerrold and myself you have heard of; Mr George Cruikshank and Mr Leech (the best caricaturists of any times perhaps) need no introduction, Mr Frank Stone (a Manchester man) and Mr Egg are artists of high reputation. Mr Forster is the critic of *The Examiner*, the author of 'The Lives of the Statesmen of the Commonwealth,' and very distinguished as a writer in *The Edinburgh Review*. Mr Lewes is also a man of great attainments in polite literature, and the author of a novel published not long since, called 'Ranthorpe.' Mr Costello is a periodical writer, and a gentleman renowned as a tourist. Mr Mark Lemon is a dramatic author, and the editor of *Punch*—a most excellent actor, as you will find. My brothers play small parts, for love, and have no greater note than the Treasury and the City confer on their disciples."

The close friendship between Dickens and Egg commenced with these "play-actings." Of the others

mentioned we will glance at one or two. Lewes is the George Henry Lewes, who wrote many things, novels, plays, biographies, dramatic and other criticisms, of whose work perhaps the most lasting will prove to be his "Life of Goëthe." In 1851 he met with "George Eliot," travelled with her in Germany three years later, and afterward lived with her until his death. He was one for whom Dickens had a sincere regard. Dudley Costello, of Irish descent as his name shows, was a journalist of considerable repute, a novelist, an expert in MSS., and, we are told, "good-humoured, sociable, and with a large stock of amusing conversation."

Mark Lemon was born in about 1820, of Jewish descent, as may be gathered from his "Christian" name, and died in the May of 1870, very shortly before the death of Dickens himself. Edmund Yates says of him, "corpulent, jovial, bright-eyed, with a hearty laugh and an air of *bonhomie*, he rolled through life the outward impersonation of jollity and good temper." In early days he was mine host of "The Shakespeare" tavern in Wych Street. As editor of *Punch* he drove his difficult team with tact and discretion. Opinions differ considerably as to his characteristics, for he has been described as a "mealy-mouthed sycophant"; Dickens called him "a most affectionate and true-hearted fellow"; and another, who knew him well, the "most loveable elderly boy I have ever seen." Joseph Hatton said of him, "he believed in one God, one woman, one publication"—his wife and *Punch*. Of his witticisms—or rather "funniments"—we will quote but one, from a letter, "our nurse-maid has the chicken-pock, and we expect to see her throw out feathers to-morrow." He published a volume of "Prose and Verse," which Douglas Jerrold unkindly dubbed

" Prose and Worse." It was to Lemon that Hans Andersen addressed the remark, " Ah, Mr Lemon, I like you ; you are so full of comic."

In 1851 Lemon was with Dickens at a time of sore trouble. John Dickens, the novelist's father, had died on April 5th, and on the 14th Dickens, yielding to pressure, fulfilled his engagement to preside at the Sixth Annual Dinner of the General Theatrical Fund. He came up from Malvern, where he had been staying, and made at the dinner a brilliant speech, from which we will make a brief quotation :—" let any man ask his own heart, and confess if he have not some grateful acknowledgements for the actor's art ? Not peculiarly because it is a profession often pursued, and as it were marked, by poverty and misfortune—for other callings, God knows, have their distresses—nor because the actor has sometimes to come from scenes of sickness, of suffering, ay, even of death itself, to play his part before us—for all of us, in our spheres, have as often to do violence to our feelings and to hide our hearts in fighting this great battle of life, and in discharging our duties and responsibilities. But the art of the actor excites reflections, sombre or grotesque, awful or humorous, with which we are all familiar. If any man were to tell me that he denied his acknowledgements to the stage, I would simply put to him one question—whether he remembered his first play ? " During the dinner Forster had been called out, to receive the sad information that Dickens's daughter Dora had died suddenly. When he left the chair, Mark Lemon helped Forster to break the terrible news. We pass on to a letter dated April 26, 1855, from Dickens to Lemon, a child of whose had died ; " Leech and I called on Tuesday and left our loves. I have not

written to you since, because I thought it best to leave you quiet for a day. I have no need to tell you, my dear fellow, that my thoughts have been constantly with you, and that I have not forgotten (and never shall forget) who sat up with me one night when a little place in my house was left empty."

Now to our tourists.

On Monday, July 26, the company appeared at Manchester, when in addition to the Ben Jonson comedy the farces "A Good Night's Rest" and "Turning the Tables" were given, the takings being over £440; on the 28th they acted at Liverpool, but for the above-named farces "Comfortable Lodgings, or Paris in 1750" was substituted; the receipts were over £460. The expenses of the undertaking were so heavy that the profits were but £420, which, however, cannot be considered a mean result.

XXIV

ODDMENTS AND ELOQUENCE

BEFORE proceeding with our story we may pause a moment to note Dickens's friendship with two poets of different countries, generations and gifts. He writes from Paris, in 1846, to M. de Cerjat that Tom Moore is very ill; he fears dying, though the fear did not prove well founded, as he lived on until 1852. Dickens adds that the last time he had seen him was in London, and that he had found him "sadly changed and tamed, but not much more so than such a man might be under the heavy hand of time." In Forster we find record of Dickens meeting with the brilliant Irish singer at the house of Sir Francis Burdett, in 1841, Rogers being present and in a somewhat rude humour. Moore was a connecting link between, we might almost say, to-day, for there are many with us still who knew Charles Dickens, and the literature and literary men of the latter end of the eighteenth century, for he was born in 1779, coming to London twenty years later. Also from Paris, but this time to Lady Blessington, Dickens writes to say that he has been to visit Victor Hugo, whose house he describes as looking like an old curiosity shop: "I was much struck by Hugo himself, who looks like a genius as he is, every inch of him, and is very interesting and satisfactory from head to foot." We have quoted these two oddments here, instead of in their proper chronological niches, for we

wish once again to draw attention to the fact that Dickens has been grossly neglected as a writer of letters and also to express the wish that some day the letters and Forster's Life may be welded into a whole, with additions and omissions. Lastly, in order that we may acknowledge the self-evident fact that these pages owe much to the Letters and the aforesaid Life.

In the autumn of this year (1847) a visit was paid to the belov'd Broadstairs, and on returning the family were able to take possession again of their own house in Devonshire Terrace. In December Mr and Mrs Dickens paid a visit to Leeds and to Glasgow, to which we will turn our attention for a moment. The first-named visit was in order that Dickens should preside at a soirée at the Leeds Mechanics' Institution, when almost twelve hundred people were present. The novelist, who was afflicted with "a most disastrous cold," spoke at some length, and it will serve the good purpose of showing what manner of speaker Dickens was on such occasions if we quote one or two passages. "The cause in which we are assembled," he said, "and the objects we are met to promote, I take, and always have taken to be, *the* cause and *the* objects involving almost all others that are essential to the welfare and happiness of mankind. And in a celebration like the present, commemorating the birth and progress of a great educational establishment, I recognise a something, not limited to the spectacle of the moment, beautiful and radiant though it be—not limited even to the success of the particular establishment in which we are more immediately interested—but extending from this place and through swarms of toiling men elsewhere, cheering and stimulating them in the onward, upward path that lies before us all. Where-

ever hammers beat, or wherever factory chimneys smoke, wherever hands are busy, or the clanking of machinery resounds—wherever, in a word, there are masses of industrious human beings whom their wise Creator did not see fit to constitute all body, but into each and every one of whom he breathed a mind—there, I would fain believe, some touch of sympathy and encouragement is felt from our collective pulse now beating in this hall." That passage may have sounded all right, but it reads dangerously like clap-trap.

The visit to Glasgow was for a somewhat similar ceremony, a soirée in the City Hall to commemorate the opening of the Glasgow Athenæum, and as an example of his lighter—and by far superior—oratory we will quote the following :—

" It is a great satisfaction to me to occupy the place I do in behalf of an infant institution ; a remarkably fine child enough, of a vigorous constitution, but an infant still. I esteem myself singularly fortunate in knowing it before its prime, in the hope that I may have the pleasure of remembering in its prime, and when it has attained to its lusty maturity, that I was a friend of its youth. It has already passed through some of the disorders to which children are liable ; it succeeded to an elder brother of a very meritorious character, but of rather a weak constitution, and which expired when about twelve months old, from, it is said, a destructive habit of getting up early in the morning : it succeeded this elder brother, and has fought manfully through a sea of troubles. Its friends have often been much concerned for it ; its pulse has been exceedingly low, being only 1250, when it was expected to have been 10,000 ; several relations and friends have even gone so far as to walk off

once or twice in the melancholy belief that it was dead. Through all that, assisted by the indomitable energy of one or two nurses, to whom it can never be sufficiently grateful, it came triumphantly, and now, of all the youthful members of its family I ever saw, it has the strongest attitude, the healthiest look, the brightest and most cheerful air."

We have neither the desire nor the space to deal with each of the many public speeches made by Dickens on similar and dissimilar occasions. But it may be said, judging as far as it is possible to do so from the written and not from the spoken word, that Dickens's speeches were very much like his writings in style, and also like them in this: that their humour was very much more admirable than their pathos, which is, to use a slangy but extremely expressive word, often rather "cheap."

Justin M'Carthy counts Dickens as quite the best after-dinner speaker he ever heard, "his voice was rich, full, and deep, capable of imparting without effort every tone and half-tone of emotion, pathetic, inspiriting, or humorous, that any spoken words could demand. His deep eyes seemed to flash upon every listener among the audience whom he addressed."

But he was at his best in "narratory" or plainly matter-of-fact passages. Here are two retrospective "bits" of thoroughly Dickensian flavour. The first is an extract from a speech delivered at the London Tavern in December, 1854, on the occasion of the Anniversary Dinner of the Commercial Travellers' Schools:—

"I think it may be assumed that most of us here present know something about travelling. I do not mean in distant regions or foreign countries, although I dare say some of us have had experience in that way, but at home,

and within the limits of the United Kingdom. I dare say most of us have had experience of the extinct 'fast coaches,' the 'Wonders,' 'Taglionis,' and 'Tally-Hos,' of other days. I dare say most of us remember certain modest post-chaises, dragging us down interminable roads, through slush and mud, to little country towns with no visible population, except half-a-dozen men in smock-frocks, half-a-dozen women with umbrellas and pattens, and a washed-out dog or so shivering under the gables, to complete the desolate picture. We can all discourse, I dare say, if so minded, about our recollections of the 'Talbot,' the 'Queen's Head,' or the 'Lion' of those days. We have all been to that room on the ground floor on one side of the old inn yard, not quite free from a certain fragrant smell of tobacco, where the cruets on the sideboard were usually absorbed by the skirts of the box-coats that hung from the wall; where awkward servants waylaid us at every turn, like so many human man-traps; where county members, framed and glazed, were eternally presenting that petition which, somehow or other, had made their glory in the county, although nothing else had ever come of it. Where the books in the windows always wanted the first, last, and middle leaves, and where the one man was always arriving at some unusual hour in the night, and requiring his breakfast at a similarly singular period of the day. I have no doubt we could all be very eloquent on the comforts of our favourite hotel, wherever it was—its beds, its stables, its vast amount of posting, its excellent cheese, its head waiter, its capital dishes, its pigeon-pies, or its 1820 port. Or possibly we could recall our chaste and innocent admiration of its landlady, or our fraternal regard for its handsome chambermaid. A celebrated domestic critic

once writing of a famous actress, renowned for her virtue and beauty, gave her the character of being an 'eminently gatherable-to-one's-arms sort of person.' Perhaps someone amongst us has borne a somewhat similar tribute to the mental charms of the fair deities who presided at our hotels."

In 1865 he presided at the second Annual Dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund, at the Freemasons' Tavern, making a speech which has become almost historic, at any rate as regards the following excerpt :—

" I hope I may be allowed in the very few closing words that I feel a desire to say in remembrance of some circumstances, rather special, attending my present occupation of this chair, to give those words something of a personal tone. I am not here advocating the case of a mere ordinary client of whom I have little or no knowledge. I hold a brief to-night for my brothers. I went into the gallery of the House of Commons as a parliamentary reporter when I was a boy not eighteen, and I left it—I can hardly believe the inexorable truth—nigh thirty years ago. I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren at home in England here, many of my modern successors, can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle yard there to identify,

for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once 'took,' as we used to call it, an election speech of my noble friend Lord Russell, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such a pelting rain, that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my notebook, after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep—kept in waiting, say, until the woolsack might want restuffing. Returning home from excited political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been, in my time, belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr Black, coming in the broadest of Scotch from the broadest of hearts I ever knew."

There could not be anything better in its class than that, or in another way than this, quoted from a speech made by Dickens at the thirteenth anniversary dinner of the General Theatrical Fund, when Thackeray was in the chair:—

"It is not for me at this time, and in this place, to take on myself to flutter before you the well-thumbed pages of Mr Thackeray's books, and to tell you to observe how

full they are of wit and wisdom, how out-speaking, and how devoid of fear or favour; but I will take leave to remark, in paying my due homage and respect to them, that it is fitting that such a writer and such an institution should be brought together. Every writer of fiction, although he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes in effect for the stage. He may never write plays; but the truth and passion which are in him must be more or less reflected in the great mirror which he holds up to nature. Actors, managers, and authors are all represented in this company, and it may be supposed that they all have studied the deep wants of the human heart in many theatres; but none of them could have studied its mysterious workings in any theatre to greater advantage than in the bright and airy pages of 'Vanity Fair.' To this skilful showman, who has so often delighted us, and who has charmed us again to-night, we have now to wish God speed, and that he may continue for many years to exercise his potent art. To him fill a bumper toast, and fervently utter, God bless him!"

From Glasgow, where they were the guests of Mr Sheriff, afterward Sir Archibald, Alison, Dickens went on to Edinburgh. The weather was not pleasant; "it has been snowing, sleeting, thawing, and freezing, sometimes by turns and sometimes all together, since the night before last," he writes to Miss Hogarth. Alison, of course, was the author of a "History of Europe," more famous perhaps than read, who—writes Dickens—"lives in style in a handsome country house out of Glasgow, and is a capital fellow, with an agreeable wife, nice little daughter, cheerful niece, all things pleasant in his household." While at Edinburgh he received from Lord Jeffrey the news of the bankruptcy of James

SHERIDAN KNOWLES

Sheridan Knowles, the Irish actor and dramatist, author of plays once held in very high esteem, but which to-day scarcely ever haunt the boards, "Virginius," "The Hunchback," "The Love Chase" and so forth.

Frith gives a highly amusing description of one of Knowles's performances in one of his own plays, "The Wife"; "he played an Italian—named Pierre, I think—with a broad Irish accent. The part was one for the display of strong passion; and the stronger became the situation, the more evident became the brogue. Knowles's square, powerful figure, with his fine expressive face, made such an impression upon me, that I believe I could recognise him now."

He was the delightful person who told O. Smith, the actor, that he always mistook him "for his namesake T. P. Cooke"!

It had been decided to give some amateur performances to endow the curatorship of the Shakespeare House at Stratford-on-Avon, destined for Knowles, which plan, however, was abandoned on the town authorities taking the matter into their hands, but the sum received was presented to the unfortunate dramatist, who later on received a pension at the hands of Lord John Russell.

"Every Man in His Humour" was repeated, "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was added to the repertoire, and the farce "Love, Law, and Physick" was also played. The performances were at Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Glasgow, and—naturally—London, at the Haymarket Theatre. The programme for May 17 makes interesting reading:—

CHARLES DICKENS

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

Amateur Performance

in aid of

THE FUND FOR THE ENDOWMENT OF A PERPETUAL CURATORSHIP OF SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE,

To be always held by some one distinguished in Literature, and more especially in Dramatic Literature; the Profits of which it is the intention of the Shakespeare House Committee to keep entirely separate from the Fund now raising for the purchase of the House.

On Wednesday Evening, May 17th, 1848, will be presented
BEN JONSON'S Comedy of

EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR.

Knowell (*an old gentleman*)	Mr. Dudley Costello.
Edward Knowell (*his son*)	Mr. Frederick Dickens.
Brainworm (*the father's man*)	Mr. Mark Lemon.
George Downwright (*a plain squire*)	Mr. Frank Stone.
Wellbred (*his half-brother*)	Mr. G. H. Lewes.
Kitely (*a merchant*)	Mr. John Forster.
Captain Bobadil (*a Paul's man*)	Mr. Charles Dickens.
Master Stephen (*a country gull*)	Mr. Augustus Egg.
Master Mathew (*the town gull*)	Mr. John Leech.
Thomas Cash (*Kitely's cashier*)	Mr. Augustus Dickens.
Oliver Cobb (*a water bearer*)	Mr. George Cruikshank.
Justice Clement (*an old merry magistrate*)	Mr. Willmott.
Roger Formal (*his Clerk*)	Mr. Cole.
Dame Kitely (*Kitely's wife*)	Miss Fortescue.
Mistress Bridget (*her sister*)	Miss Kenworthy.
Tib (*Cobb's wife*)	Mrs. Cowden Clarke.

The Costumes by Messrs. Nathan, of Titchbourne Street.

To conclude with Mr. Kenney's farce of

LOVE, LAW, AND PHYSIC.

Doctor Camphor	Mr. George Cruikshank.
Captain Danvers	Mr. Frederick Dickens.
Flexible	Mr. Charles Dickens.
Andrew	Mr. G. H. Lewes.
Lubin Log	Mr. Mark Lemon.
John Brown	Mr. Augustus Egg.
Coachman	Mr. Eaton.
Laura	Miss Anne Romer.
Mrs. Hillary	Mrs. Cowden Clarke.
Chambermaid	Miss Woulds.

The Band will perform,

Previous to the Comedy, *The Overture to Semiramide* . Rossini.

Between the Acts

Battaglie Galop		Kolloonitsch.
Czarina Mazurka		T. German Reed.
Aria Somnambula	cornet obligato	Bellini.
Wedding March		Mendelssohn.

Previous to Farce, *The Prince of Wales Quadrilles* . Jullien.

——o——

*** *The doors will be opened at half-past six, and the performance will commence at half-past seven precisely, by which time it is requested that the whole of the company may be seated.*

Directors of general arrangements—Mr. John Payne Collier, Mr. Charles Knight, Mr. Peter Cunningham and the London Shakespeare House Committee.

Stage Manager—Mr. Charles Dickens.

Evening dress in all parts of the House.

In " The Merry Wives " Mark Lemon played Falstaff, Dickens Justice Shallow and Mrs Cowden Clarke Dame Quickly, who gives a graphic description of Dickens at rehearsal :—" He had a small table placed rather to one side of the stage, at which he generally sat, as the scenes went on in which he himself took no part. On this table rested a moderate-sized box ; its interior divided into convenient compartments for holding papers, letters, etc., and this interior was always the very pink of neatness and orderly arrangement. Occasionally he would leave his seat at the managerial table, and stand with his back to the foot-lights, in the very centre of the front of the stage, and view the whole effect of the rehearsed performance as it proceeded, observing the attitudes and positions of those engaged in the dialogue, their mode of entrance, exit, etc., etc. He never seemed to overlook anything ; but to note the very slightest point that conduced to the ' going well ' of the whole performance. With all this supervision, however, it was pleasant to remark the utter absence of dictatorialness or arrogation

of superiority that distinguished his mode of ruling his troop: he exerted his authority firmly and perpetually; but in such a manner as to make it universally felt to be for no purpose of self-assertion or self-importance; on the contrary, to be for the sole purpose of ensuring general success to their united efforts."

A rehearsal with him was serious, earnest work. Of his acting, to which we shall return later on, she also gives a vivid word-picture:—

"The 'make-up' of Dickens as Justice Shallow was so complete, that his own identity was almost unrecognisable, when he came on to the stage, as the curtain rose, in company with Sir Hugh and Master Slender; but after a moment's breathless pause, the whole house burst forth into a roar of applausive reception, which testified to the boundless delight of the assembled audience on beholding the literary idol of the day, actually before them. His impersonation was perfect: the old, stiff limbs, the senile stoop of the shoulders, the head bent with age, the feeble step, with a certain attempted smartness of carriage characteristic of the conceited Justice of the Peace—were all assumed and maintained with wonderful accuracy; while the articulation, part lisp, part thickness of utterance, part a kind of impeded sibilation, like that of a voice that 'pipes and whistles in the sound' through loss of teeth—gave consummate effect to his mode of speech. The one in which Shallow says, ''Tis the heart, Master Page; 'tis here, 'tis here. I have seen the time with my long sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats,' was delivered with a humour of expression in effete energy of action and would-be fire of spirit that marvellously imaged fourscore years in its attempt to denote vigour long since extinct."

A GORGEOUS COSTUME

In this same year (1848) or thereabouts, Dickens in his own proper person is depicted by Sir Joseph Crowe as "full of fun and enjoyed company vastly. His abundant hair of sable hue enframed a grand face, somewhat drawn and thrown into capricious ridges. His dress was florid: a satin cravat of the deepest blue, relieved by embroideries, a green waistcoat with gold flowers, a dress coat with a velvet collar and satin facings, opulence of white cuff, rings in excess, made up a rather striking whole."

The performances began in London on April 15, and the tour lasted—on and off—until July 20, the result being gross receipts amounting to over £2500.

XXV

1848-9

IN this and some of the succeeding years Dickens passed quite a considerable portion of his time at the seaside. In March he and his wife were at Brighton, Mrs Macready, who was in ill-health, being with them. Then came the play-acting, as described, when the actors were accompanied by Mrs Dickens and Miss Hogarth; then in the autumn Broadstairs again; at the end of the year Brighton once more with his wife and sister-in-law; not a bad series of outings for one year. In the February of '49 they were back at Brighton, where the Leeches joined them. This visit was remarkable for the landlord of the lodgings and his daughter being attacked by lunacy—"if you could have heard the cursing and crying of the two; could have seen the physician and nurse quoited out into the passage by the madman at the hazard of their lives; could have seen Leech and me flying to the doctor's rescue; could have seen our wives pulling us back; could have seen the M.D. faint with fear; could have seen three other M.D.'s come to his aid; with an atmosphere of Mrs Gamps, strait-waistcoats, struggling friends and servants, surrounding the whole . . ."!

Then came a desertion of Broadstairs in the summer and a quite notable visit to the Isle of Wight. This going to Bonchurch seems first to have been discussed early in

the preceding year, judging by a letter to the Reverend James White, in which Dickens expresses a fear that Bonchurch may prove too relaxing, adding that his thoughts have wandered to the north as far as Yorkshire, and sometimes to Dover.

James White, a very jolly, jovial man, is to be counted as one of the most intimate and most dear of Dickens's friends, and this visit to Bonchurch, where he lived, cemented the friendship between the two families. He was born in 1803, dying in 1862, and was educated at Pembroke College, Oxford. He was a miscellaneous writer of considerable scope and no little ability. Of him Forster gives a quite delightful account: "in the kindly shrewd Scotch face, a keen sensitiveness to pleasure and pain was the first thing that struck any common observer. Cheerfulness and gloom coursed over it so rapidly that no one could question the tale they told. But the relish of his life had outlived its more than usual share of sorrows; and quaint sly humour, love of jest and merriment, capital knowledge of books, and sagacious quips at men, made his companionship delightful."

Charles Knight met him with Dickens at Broadstairs in 1850, and says "it was impossible for me not to love him. His heart was as warm as his intellect was clear. His conversational powers were of no common order, for to the richness of a cultivated mind he brought a natural vein of humour."

Dickens apparently went on ahead to spy out the land, for he writes to his wife on June 16 from Shanklin that he has "taken a most delightful and beautiful house, belonging to White, at Bonchurch; cool, airy, private bathing, everything delicious. I think it is the prettiest place I ever saw in my life, at home or abroad."

The villa bore—for a summer resort—the ill-omened name of Winterbourne.

Great were the fun and the junketings! Many the pleasant visitors; Mr and Mrs Leech were with them much of the time, and others were Mark Lemon, Macready, Talfourd, Egg. Dickens seems to have rioted to the top of his bent, giving full fling to his inexhaustible spirits. One of the frolics was the starting of a club dubbed the "Sea Serpents," in opposition to the "Red Lions," of which association Dr Edwin Lankester, a well-known man of science, was the merry leader. Here is Mrs Lankester's account of the gay-dog doings of the "Serpents." "I recollect the jolly procession from Sandown as it moved across the Downs, young and old carrying aloft a banner bearing the device of a noble red lion painted in vermilion on a white ground. Wending up the hill from the Bonchurch side might be seen the 'Sea Serpents,' with their ensign floating in the wind—a waving, curling serpent, cut out of yards and yards of calico, and painted of a bronzy-green colour with fiery-red eyes, its tail being supported at the end by a second banner-holder. Carts brought up the provisions on either side, and at the top the factions met to prepare and consume the banquet on the short, sweet grass under shadow of a rock or a tree." Leech would immortalise the party with his pencil, and they—or some of them—appeared in *Punch* on August 25, as participators in the tragedy labelled "Awful Appearance of a 'Wopps' at a Picnic." Then by way of additional sport a race would be arranged between those two stout men, Dr Lankester and Mark Lemon, the stately Macready acting as judge.

But it was not all "beer and skittles." Toward the end of September a most unfortunate and dangerous

accident befell Leech. Bathing when the sea was running somewhat high, he was knocked down by a heavy wave, the blow resulting in congestion of the brain, a serious and anxious illness. Bleeding was resorted to, but at last to alleviate the alarming restlessness of the sufferer, Dickens proposed to Mrs Leech that he should try the effect of mesmerism; "I fell to; and, after a very fatiguing bout of it, put him to sleep for an hour and thirty-five minutes. A change came on in the sleep and he is decidedly better."

The enervating climate of the Isle of Wight did not at all suit Dickens; "Naples is hot and dirty, New York feverish, Washington bilious, Genoa exciting, Paris rainy—but Bonchurch, smashing. I am quite convinced that I should die here, in a year." It was not he only that suffered, but his wife, Miss Hogarth, and the Leeches were similarly affected. So he "folded his tents" at the end of September and beat a retreat to recruit at Broadstairs, whose reviving breezes soon worked wonders.

During this year he was busily at work on "David Copperfield," which of his books he loved the best and in which he has shown us so much of himself. We have not in these pages done more than make bare mention of any of his other stories, but to this one novel we must devote some little space, for although Forster rightly warns us not to strain the point too far, there is undoubtedly much in its pages of autobiography, we cannot hope ever to know with exactness how much.

The publication of the novel, in monthly parts, by Messrs Bradbury and Evans, commenced in May, 1849, concluding in November of the following year. We do not for a moment intend to discuss the literary value of

the story or to debate as to who were or were not the originals of various people in it; we solely desire to draw attention once again to those portions of the novel which are to all intents and purposes an autobiography of a part of the author's unhappy boyhood. Mr Kitton tells us that in a letter to Mrs Howitt Dickens said that "many childish experiences and many young struggles" had been worked by him into "Copperfield." We must not identify Dickens with David, but the chapters of the book to which we refer do certainly help us to understand in what light Dickens looked back upon those miserable days, when all hope of advance for him seemed to have disappeared; "no words can express the secret agony of my soul," he writes, going on to say, "my whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation . . . that, even now—famous and caressed and happy—I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children—even that I am a man—and wander desolately back to that time of my life." It certainly is amazing that any parents could have forced a "child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally" into a life of mechanical drudgery amid repugnant surroundings and degrading associations; "I know I do not exaggerate," he writes, "unconsciously and unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. . . . I know that I worked, from morning to night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. . . . I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond." How often in later years, when doing all in his power to make happy the lives of his own children and those of others, must his thoughts have recurred to that time when he

worked at covering the blacking pots in the factory by old Hungerford Stairs ?

Before we leave this subject, we must refer to the fact that Dickens wrote to Forster that to no one, " my own wife not excepted," had he ever narrated the story of those unforgettable days, which statement does not tally with one made by Charles Dickens, junior, who says, "I have my mother's authority for saying . . . that the story was eventually read to her in strict confidence by my father, who at the same time intimated his intention of publishing it by-and-bye as a portion of his autobiography. From this purpose she endeavoured to dissuade him : on the ground that he had spoken with undue harshness of his father, and especially of his mother : and with so much success that he eventually decided that he would be satisfied with working it into 'David Copperfield,' and would give up the idea of publishing it as it stood." It will probably remain one of the multitudinous curiosities of literature that the story in the end saw the light in the pages of Forster, who was indiscreet, or misunderstood Dickens's wishes, or else the latter changed his mind. But certainly Forster might have used his judgment and power as biographer to delete the few lines that bear most hardly upon Dickens's father and mother.

Toward the close of the writing of this book Dickens wrote, " Oh my dear Forster, if I were but to say half of what *Copperfield* makes me feel to-night, how strangely, even to you, I should be turned inside out ! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World."

XXVI

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

THE first number of "Household Words" was published on March 30, 1850, and we must introduce ourselves to W. H. Wills, the sub-editor, who won and retained Dickens's esteem and high regard. Their knowledge of one another had commenced during the unfortunate experiment with the *Daily News*. He has been described to us by one who knew him as a nice fellow, a hard worker, but one not at all fond of pushing himself forward, all of which is amply borne out by what we learn of him from other sources.

He was a constant contributor to *Punch* from the commencement of its career, and was secretary to Dickens in the *Daily News* days, when he was "a small thin man with nimble but slender hands, small but very quick eyes, and a blotched complexion, indicating a defective digestion," says Sir Joseph Crowe. His wife was a sister of Robert Chambers, the Edinburgh publisher, and—with an eye to his slimness—used to sing "Better be mairried to somethin' than no to be married ava!" and Douglas Jerrold declared that Wills had been in training all his life to go up a gas pipe. Mrs Lynn Linton was in Paris in the 'fifties, and notes, "it was here that I first saw Henry Wills, who, with his wife, afterwards became one of my dearest friends." She found him, as

did so many others, kindly-hearted and considerate in all his dealings.

Wills afterward became Dickens's partner in "All the Year Round." We shall meet with him again.

Of others whose names became "Household Words" we may introduce a few, giving first place to the authoress of "Mary Barton," "Cranford," and the "Life of Charlotte Brontë," Mrs Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell.

Mrs Cowden Clarke describes her first meeting with Mrs Gaskell, at a luncheon given by Mrs Tagart: "we found a charming, brilliant-complexioned, but quiet-mannered woman; thoroughly unaffected, thoroughly attractive—so modest that she blushed like a girl when we hazarded some expression of our admiration of her 'Mary Barton'; so full of enthusiasm on general subjects of humanity and benevolence that she talked freely and vividly at once upon them; and so young in look and demeanour that we could hardly believe her to be the mother of two daughters she mentioned in terms that showed them to be no longer children"; and Mrs Lynn Linton speaks of Mrs Gaskell in the 'fifties "with her beautiful white arms bare to the shoulder, and as destitute of bracelets as her hands were of gloves."

That Dickens sincerely admired her work is amply shown not only by the fact that he was anxious to secure her aid but by the terms in which he asked for it. Writing early in 1850 he says: "I do honestly know that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist in preference to the authoress of 'Mary Barton' (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me). . . . My unaffected and great admiration of your book makes me very earnest in all relating to you."

Forster tells us that George Augustus Henry Sala,

to give him his full names, was of all the hitherto unknown writers whom "Household Words" helped on their way the one in whom Dickens took the greatest personal interest. "G. A. S." in course of time became renowned initials the world over, as belonging to one who in his exuberant way was, perhaps, entitled to be called the Prince of Journalists. As a literary man he cannot claim a distinguished place, but as a writer of bright, picturesque, telling journalese he has scarcely had a rival. Sala was born in 1828, and lived until nearly the close of the nineteenth century. Edmund Yates, a faithful friend and colleague of his, gives an account of him in those early days:—he met him at the Fielding Club, to which he had been taken to meet the Marquis of Stafford and some others, who were loudly praising an American story in "Household Words," called "Colonel Quagg's Conversion." There was much surmise as to who the writer of it could be, but Albert Smith declared that he could produce the author; he "went away, returning in triumph with a slim modest young fellow, about six-and-twenty years of age,"—G. A. S. Yates proceeds, allowing his good-nature to run away with his critical faculty, "I may be perhaps permitted to say that in the volumes of *Household Words* from '53 to '56 are to be found essays which not merely the author of *Paris Herself Again* and *America Revisited* has never surpassed, but which Goldsmith or Lamb might have been proud to father." Had they been so, it would only have gone to prove that it is a wise father who knows the value of his own children. His education may be described as miscellaneous; he studied drawing and sometimes drew; he was for some time a scene painter; but journalism was his real "line."

W. P. FRITH, R.A. (AGED 30).
From the Painting by Augustus L. Egg, R.A.

Frith has somewhat to tell of him, and gives him a good character :—" he is as charming a companion as such a writer might be expected to be. With the tenderest heart in the world, I am sure he never wrote a severe line about any person or thing unless both thing and person richly deserved it," which of a critic of painting from a painter is truly unusual praise. He was usually seen in a white waistcoat, which explains the following extract from a letter to Frith, who was painting his portrait in the picture of " The Private View " :—" I send you a photo, which Mrs Sala declares to be the best. . . . Don't forget the white waistcoat. I have worn one every day for five-and-twenty years, so that an old washerwoman said to me once : ' How I should like to be your washerwoman ! ' By this time she would have taken more than two hundred pounds for washing my vests alone. I am old and poor,[1] but I don't regret the outlay on my laundry. You can't very well murder when you have a white waistcoat on. By donning that snowy garment you have, in a manner, given hostages to respectability."

In " Leaves from a Life " quite a dramatic story is told of a party given at Mr Frith's when Sala, who had just returned from the American civil war, was present. The writer says " we found him most enthrallingly interesting, more especially as he knew all the battle-songs, and sang ' Maryland, my Maryland,' in a way I have never forgotten. I do not mean to say he sang in the accepted or professional sense of the word, but he declaimed the words to music in such a manner that one longed to go out and fight, and I for one could have wept with sheer delight at the melodies." Mr Frith had arranged the

[1] Written in 1881.

dinner as a meeting between Bret Harte and Sala, thinking that the two would be delighted to fraternise. The Salas arrived first, and our authoress was chatting with him in the inner drawing-room when Bret Harte was announced; "I noticed Mr Sala start and look out eagerly into the other room; but before he could move, Papa came up with Bret Harte, saying, 'I want to introduce my old friend Sala to you, Mr Harte.' Sala got up; but before anything else could be said, Bret Harte looked straight at Sala, and remarked quite coolly, 'Sorry to make unpleasant scenes, but I am not going to be introduced to that scoundrel.' Imagine the sensation, if you can! Papa protested, and tried to make some sort of a *modus vivendi* between the two men, but it ended by poor Sala and his wife going into the little library, and waiting there until a cab could be fetched, and they left us without their dinner." It transpired later that Bret Harte's anger had been roused by something which Sala had written about a lady who had carried despatches in the war, and that he had sworn to shoot him at sight! As the writer pathetically adds, "the evening was naturally not a success."

Sala was clever in verse as well as in prose, as may be seen from the following verses written during his "Journey Due North" to St Petersburg on a mission from "Household Words," and published in "The Train," appropriately enough :—

"The King of Prussia drinks champagne,
Old Porson drank whate'er was handy;
Maginn drank gin, Judge Blackstone port,
And many famous wits drank brandy.
Stern William Romer drinketh beer,
And so does Tennyson the rhymer;
But I'll renounce all liquors for
My Caviar and Rüdesheimer.

If some kind heart that beats for me
This troubled head could e'er be pressed on ;
If in the awful night, this hand
Outstretched a form I loved could rest on ;
If wife, or child, or friend, or dog
I called my own, in any clime—a,
This lyre I'd tune to other strains
Than Caviar and Rüdesheimer."

Edmund Hodgson Yates, from whose delightful "Recollections and Experiences" we have quoted more than once, was born in 1831 in Edinburgh, where his father Frederick Henry Yates and his mother Elizabeth Brunton (Mrs Yates) were then acting. Of his mother and her acting Dickens was a keen admirer ; "no one alive," he wrote in 1858, some years after she had left the boards, "can have more delightful associations with the lightest sound of your voice than I have ; and to give you a minute's interest and pleasure, in acknowledgment of the uncountable hours of happiness you gave me, would honestly gratify my heart." After her death in 1860, he wrote to Edmund Yates: "You know what a long and faithful remembrance I always had of your mother as a part of my youth, no more capable of restoration than my youth itself. All the womanly goodness, grace and beauty of my drama went out with her. To the last, I never could hear her voice without emotion. I think of her as of a beautiful part of my own youth, and the dream that we are all dreaming seems to darken."

We meet Frederick Yates acting in "Nicholas Nickleby" in 1838, and as Quilp in 1844. Of the first-named Dickens wrote to the actor : "My general objection to the adaptation of any unfinished work of mine simply is that, being badly done and worse acted, it tends to vulgarise the characters, to destroy or weaken in the minds of those who see them the impressions I have

endeavoured to create, and consequently to lessen the after interest in their progress. No such objection can exist for a moment where the thing is so admirably done in every respect as you have done it in this instance."

Edmund Yates is best remembered as the founder of the first modern society journal, *The World*, and as the writer of one of the most entertaining memoirs in the language, a book full of pleasant memories of other days which are rapidly fading into the mists of the historic. Turning once more to "Leaves from a Life," we obtain many glimpses of Yates; "he was a tall, finely-made man," we are told, "with curly hair and a heavy moustache, which concealed in a measure the fact that he was underhung, and he had a most powerful chin and jaw. He was not good-looking, and naturally the old joke of Beauty and the Beast was repeated more than once about him and his beautiful wife. But he was anything but a beast; he was the truest, dearest, most honourable of men and friends."

Of his knowledge of and friendship with Dickens, Yates gives a full account. "I have heard Dickens described by those who knew him as aggressive, imperious, and intolerant, and I can comprehend the accusation; but to me his temper was always of the sweetest and kindest. He would, I doubt not, have been easily bored, and would not have scrupled to show it; but he never ran the risk. He was imperious in the sense that his life was conducted on the *sic volo, sic jubeo* principle, and that everything gave way before him. The society in which he mixed, the hours which he kept, the opinions which he held, his likes and dislikes, his ideas of what should or should not be, were all settled by himself, not merely for himself, but for all those brought into connection

with him, and it was never imagined they could be called in question. Yet he was never regarded as a tyrant; he had immense power of will, absolute mesmeric force."

One more quotation from these pages, to show the readiness and kindliness of Dickens:—Yates was frequently called upon at public dinners to propose Dickens's health, "on one occasion—it was at one of the Newsvendors' dinners—I said nothing at all! I duly rose, but, after a few words, my thoughts entirely deserted me, I entirely lost the thread of what I had intended saying, I felt as though a black veil were dropped over my head; all I could do was to mutter 'health,' 'chairman,' and to sit down. I was tolerably well known to the guests at those dinners, and they were evidently much astonished. They cheered the toast, as in duty bound, and Dickens was on his feet in a moment. 'Often,' he said—'often as I have had the pleasure of having my health proposed by my friend, who has just sat down, I have never yet seen him so overcome by his affection and generous emotion as on the present occasion!' These words turned what would have been a fiasco into a triumph. 'I saved you that time, I think, sir!' he said to me as I walked away with him. 'Serves you well right for being over-confident!'"

Yates was a capital after-dinner speaker; we recall him at a Literary Fund Dinner commencing his remarks by pathetically saying that the gods looked down with admiration on a brave man struggling with adversity, but that "both gods and men should do so on a fat man with a cold in his head struggling to make an after-dinner speech"!

XXVII

MORE PLAYING

IN the autumn of 1850 the family were once more at Broadstairs, occupying for the first time "Fort House," which Dickens had long coveted. Mrs Dickens lingered on in town for some time, and there is a most amusing letter to her from her husband, dated September 3, in which he mentions a walk taken with Charles Knight, White, Forster and Charles junior to the Roman Castle of Richborough, near to Sandwich, one of the most interesting spots in the pleasant county of Kent, which might almost be called Dickens's county, so closely is his name connected with many places in it —with Rochester, Chatham, Chalk, Cobham, Gad's Hill, Canterbury, Broadstairs, and many another locality. Then follows an account of the bold behaviour of his son Sydney, who bravely set out by himself one Sunday evening to see if the expected Forster had arrived. He was pursued and brought back more than once, until at last, instead of chasing him again, his father shut the gate, and the party awaited developments. "Ally," who accompanied Sydney, was dismayed, but his brother made a ferocious onslaught upon the gate, demanding that it should be opened and backing up his request by hurling a huge stone into the garden. The garrison surrendered, and the honours of war were with Sydney.

From Broadstairs Dickens wrote to Sir Edward

Bulwer Lytton anent a proposed performance of " Every Man in His Humour " at Knebworth.

Forster speaks most cordially of Lytton, but with some extravagance, noting his burial in Westminster Abbey, " which never opened to receive a more varied genius, a more gallant spirit, a man more constant to his friends, more true to any cause he represented, or whose name will hereafter be found entitled to a more honoured place in the history of his time." Dickens, too, held him in very high esteem ; writing of him in 1845, he says, " Bulwer Lytton's conduct is that of a generous and noble-minded man, as I have ever thought him." At the Macready dinner in 1851, when Lytton was in the chair, Dickens in proposing his health said :—

" There is a popular prejudice, a kind of superstition to the effect that authors are not a particularly united body, that they are not invariably and inseparably attached to each other. I am afraid I must concede half-a-grain or so of truth to that superstition ; but this I know, that there can hardly be—that there hardly can have been—among the followers of literature, a man of more high standing farther above these little grudging jealousies, which do sometimes disparage its brightness, than Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

" And I have the strongest reason just at present to bear my testimony to his great consideration for those evils which are sometimes unfortunately attendant upon it, though not on him. For, in conjunction with some other gentlemen now present, I have just embarked in a design with Sir Bulwer Lytton, to smoothe the rugged way of young labourers, both in literature and the fine arts, and to soften, but by no eleemosynary means, the declining years of meritorious age. And if that project

prosper as I hope it will, and as I know it ought, it will one day be an honour to England where there is now a reproach; originating in his sympathies, being brought into operation by his activity, and endowed from its very cradle by his generosity. There are many among you who will have each his own favourite reason for drinking our chairman's health, resting his claim probably upon some of his diversified successes. According to the nature of your reading, some of you will connect him with prose, others will connect him with poetry. One will connect him with comedy, and another with the romantic passions of the stage, and his assertion of worthy ambition and earnest struggle against

> 'those twin gaolers of the human heart,
> Low birth and iron fortune.'

Again, another's taste will lead him to the contemplation of Rienzi and the streets of Rome; another's to the rebuilt and repeopled streets of Pompeii; another's to the touching history of the fireside where the Caxton family learned how to discipline their natures and tame their wild hopes down."

In 1861 Lytton arranged to contribute his weird "Strange Story" to the pages of "All the Year Round," and Dickens paid him a visit at Knebworth to consult with him. He describes his host as "in better health and spirits than I have seen him in, in all these years,—a little weird occasionally regarding magic and spirits, but always fair and frank under opposition. He was brilliantly talkative, anecdotical, and droll; looked young and well[1]; laughed heartily; and enjoyed with great zest some games we played. In his artist character

[1] He was born in 1803, and died in 1873.

and talk, he was full of interest and matter, saying the subtlest and finest things—but that he never fails in."

It is by no means incumbent upon us to write the life of Lytton—which by the way yet remains to be and should be written—and we will content ourselves with two small peeps at him in earlier days. In 1831, in his twenty-eighth year, he was appointed editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, to which Lady Blessington contributed her "Journals of Conversations with Lord Byron"; he was described then as a "talented blue-eyed dandy," who some three years previously had married Rosina Doyle Wheeler, a beautiful Irishwoman, who was the cause of the only quarrel between him and his mother, and from whom he separated in 1836. It was in 1832 that Lady Blessington first met him.

Benjamin Disraeli writes to his sister in February, 1832, "We had a very brilliant réunion at Bulwer's last night. Among the notables were . . . Count d'Orsay, the famous Parisian dandy; there was a large sprinkling of blues—Lady Morgan, Mrs Norton, L. E. L., etc. Bulwer came up to me, said 'There is one blue who insists upon an introduction.' 'Oh, my dear fellow, I cannot really, the power of repartee has deserted me.' 'I have pledged myself, you must come'; so he led me up to a very sumptuous personage, looking like a full-blown rose, Mrs Gore. . . . I avoided L. E. L., who looked the very personification of Brompton—pink satin dress and white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and hair *à la* Sappho."

Sumner speaks of him in 1838 "in his flash *falsetto* dress, with high-heel boots, a white great coat, and a flaming blue cravat," and at the Athenæum!

Rudolf Lehmann gives us a detailed picture of Lytton:

"Tall, slim, with finely cut features, prominent among which was a long aquiline nose, with an abundant crop of curly brown hair and a full beard, the first impression he produced, aided by a careful toilette, was one of elegance and ease. . . . There was a certain naïveté, strange as that word may sound when applied to so confirmed a man of the world, in his vain and very apparent struggle against the irresistible encroachments of age. He did not give in with that philosophical resignation which might have been expected of one so clever, and in some respects so wise. He fought against it tooth and nail. Lord Lytton's hair seemed dyed, and his face looked as if art had been called in aid to rejuvenate it. A quack in Paris had pretended to cure his growing deafness, a constant source of legitimate grief to him."

Three performances of Ben Jonson's comedy took place in November in the hall of Knebworth Park; here followeth the programme :—

KNEBWORTH.

On Monday, November 18th, 1850,
will be performed Ben Jonson's comedy of

EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR.

Costumiers.—Messrs. Nathan, of Titchbourne Street.
Perruquier.—Mr. Wilson, of the Strand.

Knowell (*an old gentleman*) . . .	Mr. Delmé Radcliffe.
Edward Knowell (*his son*) . . .	Mr. Henry Hawkins.
Brainworm (*the father's man*) . . .	Mr. Mark Lemon.
George Downright (*a plain squire*) . .	Mr. Frank Stone.
Wellbred (*his half-brother*) . . .	Mr. Henry Hale.
Kitely (*a merchant*)	Mr. John Forster.
Captain Bobadil (*a Paul's man*) . .	Mr. Charles Dickens.
Master Stephen (*a country gull*) . .	Mr. Douglas Jerrold.
Master Matthew (*the town gull*) . . .	Mr. John Leech.
Thomas Cash (*Kitely's cashier*) . . .	Mr. Frederick Dickens.

Oliver Cobb (*a water-bearer*) . . .	Mr. Augustus Egg.
Justice Clement (*an old merry magistrate*) .	The Hon. Eliot Yorke.
Roger Formal (*his clerk*)	Mr. Phantom.
Dame Kitely (*Kitely's wife*) . . .	Miss Anne Romer.
Mistress Bridget (*his sister*) . . .	Miss Hogarth.
Tib (*Cob's wife*)	Mrs. Mark Lemon.

(Who has kindly consented to act in lieu of MRS. CHARLES DICKENS, disabled by an accident.)

The Epilogue by Mr. Delmé Radcliffe.

To conclude with Mrs. Inchbald's farce of

ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

The Doctor	Mr. Charles Dickens.
La Fleur	Mr. Mark Lemon.
The Marquis de Lancy	Mr. John Leech.
Jeffery	Mr. Augustus Egg.
Constance	Miss Hogarth.
Lisette	Miss Anne Romer.
Stage Manager . . .	Mr. Charles Dickens.

The theatre will be open at half past six. The performance will begin precisely at half-past seven.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

It had been hoped that Mary Boyle—"because she is the very best actress I ever saw off the stage, and immeasurably better than a great many I have seen on it," wrote Dickens—would have taken the part of Mrs Kitely and of Lisette in the farce, but unfortunately a domestic bereavement prevented her so doing. Mrs Dickens was the unfortunate victim of an accident during a rehearsal, spraining her ankle in a trap-door, and Mrs Mark Lemon came to the rescue. "The nights at Knebworth," were, as Dickens was confident they would be, "*triumphant.*"

The "design" mentioned in Dickens's speech at the Macready dinner above quoted, was the founding and endowing of a "Guild of Literature and Art," the scheme

originating at Knebworth. As a means of raising at any rate a portion of the necessary funds it was planned to give a series of representations of a new comedy which Lytton undertook to write, and of a farce by Dickens, which latter, however, never saw the light of day, or rather of the footlights, in its place being given a similar piece by Lemon, to which Dickens, who acted in it, contributed not a little of the fun. Dickens wrote to the Duke of Devonshire, outlining the scheme to him, and telling him what they hoped for, namely, to act their play at Devonshire House before the Queen and Court. The answer was prompt and satisfactory :—" I have read with very great interest the prospectus of the new endowment which you have confided to my perusal. . . . I'm truly happy to offer you my earnest and sincere co-operation. My services, my house, and my subscription will be at your orders. And I beg you to let me see you before long, not merely to converse upon this subject, but because I have long had the greatest wish to improve our acquaintance, which has, as yet, been only one of crowded rooms."

The kindly peer was every whit as good as his word ; a theatre was built up in the great drawing-room and the library converted into a green-room.

Richard Hengist Horne, better known as " Orion " Horne, after his epic which he published at the price of a farthing, took part in the comedy and has left us an account of the performance and the preparations for it.

" The Duke gave us the use of his large picture gallery, to be fitted up with seats for the audience ; and his library adjoining for the erection of the theatre. The latter room being longer than required for the stage and the scenery, the back portion of it was screened off for

a 'green-room.' Sir Joseph Paxton was most careful in the erection of the theatre and seats. There was a special box for the Queen. None of the valuable paintings in the picture gallery (arranged for the auditorium) were removed; but all were faced with planks, and covered with crimson velvet draperies; not a nail was allowed to be hammered into the floor or walls, the lateral supports being by the pressure from end to end, of padded beams; and the uprights, or stanchions, were fitted with iron feet, firmly fixed to the floor by copper screws. The lamps and their oil were well considered, so that the smoke should not be offensive or injurious—even the oil being slightly scented—and there was a profusion of wax candles. Sir Joseph Paxton also arranged the ventilation in the most skilful manner; and, with some assistance from a theatrical machinist, he put up all the scenes, curtains, and flies. Dickens was unanimously chosen general manager, and Mark Lemon stage manager. We had a professional gentleman for prompter, as none of the amateurs could be entrusted with so technical, ticklish, and momentous a duty.

"Never in the world of theatres was a better manager than Charles Dickens. Without, of course, questioning the superiority of Goethe (in the Weimar theatre) as a manager in all matters of high-class dramatic literature, one cannot think he could have been so excellent in all general requirements, stage effects, and practical details. Equally assiduous and unwearying as Dickens, surely very few men ever were, or could possibly be. He appeared almost ubiquitous and sleepless."

The opening night at Devonshire House was May 27; the playbill being as follows when the performance was repeated later on at the Hanover Square Rooms in June :—

The Amateur Company of the Guild of Literature and Art,

To encourage Life Assurance and other Provident habits among Authors and Artists; to render such assistance to both as shall never compromise their independence; and to found a new Institution where honourable rest from arduous labour shall still be associated with the discharge of congenial duties;

Will have the Honour of Performing, for the THIRD TIME, a New Comedy, in Five Acts, by SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, Bart., called

NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM;

or,

MANY SIDES TO A CHARACTER:

The Duke of Middlesex	*Peers attached to the son of James II., commonly called the First Pretender*	Mr. Frank Stone.
The Earl of Loftus		Mr. Dudley Costello.
Lord Wilmot (*a young Man at the head of the Mode more than a century ago, son to Lord Loftus*)		Mr. Charles Dickens.
Mr. Shadowly Softhead (*a young gentleman from the City, Friend and Double to Lord Wilmot*)		Mr. Douglas Jerrold.
Mr. Hardman (*a rising Member of Parliament and Adherent to Sir Robert Walpole*)		Mr. John Forster.
Sir Geoffrey Thornside (*a gentleman of good family and estate*)		Mr. Mark Lemon.
Mr. Goodenough Easy (*in business, highly respectable, and a friend of Sir Geoffrey*)		Mr. F. W. Topham.
Lord Le Trimmer		Mr. Peter Cunningham.
Sir Thomas Timid		Mr. Westland Marston.
Colonel Flint		Mr. R. H. Horne.
Mr. Jacob Tonson (*a bookseller*)		Mr. Charles Knight.
Smart (*valet to Lord Wilmot*)		Mr. Wilkie Collins.
Hodge (*servant to Sir Geoffrey Thornside*)		Mr. John Tenniel.
Paddy O'Sullivan (*Mr. Fallen's landlord*)		Mr. Robert Bell.
Mr. David Fallen (*Grub Street author and pamphleteer*)		Mr. Augustus Egg.

Lord Strongbow, Sir John Bruin, Coffee-House Loungers, Drawers, Watchmen and Newsmen.

Lucy (*daughter to Sir Geoffrey Thornside*)	Mrs. Henry Compton.
Barbara (*daughter to Mr. Easy*)	Miss Young.
The Silent Lady of Deadman's Lane	Mrs. Coe.

SCENERY.

Lord Wilmot's Lodgings	Painted by	Mr. Pitt.
"The Murillo"	,,	Mr. Absalom.
Sir Geoffrey Thornside's Library	,,	Mr. Pitt.

"NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM"

Will's Coffee-house . . .	Painted by	Mr. Pitt.
The Streets and Deadman's Lane	,,	Mr. Thomas Grieve.
The Distrest Poet's Garret (*after Hogarth*).	,,	Mr. Pitt.
The Mall in the Park . . .	,,	Mr. Telbin.
An Open Space near the River .	,,	Mr. Stanfield, R.A.
Tapestry Chamber in Deadman's Lane	,,	Mr. Louis Haghe.
The Act Drop	,,	Mr. Roberts, R.A.

Previous to the Play, the Band will perform, under the direction of Mr. Lund, an Overture, composed expressly for this occasion by Mr. C. Coote, Pianist to His Grace the Duke of Devonshire.

The performance to conclude with (for the second time) an Original Farce, in One Act, by Mr. Charles Dickens and Mr. Mark Lemon, entitled

MR. NIGHTINGALE'S DIARY:

Mr. Nightingale	Mr. Dudley Costello.
Mr. Gabblewig (*of the Middle Temple*) .	Mr. Charles Dickens.
Tip (*his Tiger*)	Mr. Augustus Egg.
Slap (*professionally Mr. Flormiville*) .	Mr. Mark Lemon.
Lithers (*landlord of the "Water-Lily"*) .	Mr. Wilkie Collins.
Rosina	Miss Young.
Susan	Mrs. Coe.

The Proscenium by Mr. Crace. The Theatre constructed by Mr. Sloman, machinist of the Royal Lyceum Theatre. The Properties and Appointments by Mr. G. Foster. The Costumes (with the exception of the Ladies' dresses, and the dresses of the Farce, which are by Messrs. Nathan, of Titchborne Street) made by Mr. Barnett, of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket. Under the superintendence of Mr. Augustus Egg, A.R.A. Perruquier, Mr. Wilson, of the Strand. Prompter, Mr. Coe.

—o—

The whole Produced under the Direction of Mr. CHARLES DICKENS.

—o—

The Band will be under the Direction of Mr. LUND.

Tickets (all the seats being reserved), 10s. each, to be had of Mr. Sams, 1, St. James's Street).

Doors open at a Quarter before SEVEN; commence at exactly a Quarter before EIGHT. The whole of the audience are particularly recommended to be seated before a Quarter to Eight.

Of Dickens's acting Horne says:—"The character and costume of 'Lord Wilmot, a young man *at the head of the Mode*, more than a century ago,' did not . t him. His bearing on the stage, and the tone of his voice, were too rigid, hard, and quarter-de like, for such 'rank and fashion,' and his make-up, with the three-cornered, gold-laced, cocked hat, black curled wig, huge sleeve cuffs, long flapped waistcoat, knee-breeches and shoe-buckles, were not carried off with the proper air; so that he would have made a good portrait of a captain of a Dutch privateer, after having taken a capital prize. When he shouted in praise of the wine of Burgundy it far rather suggested fine kegs of Schiedam."

Of the Devonshire House performance, at which the Queen, the Prince Consort and a very distinguished audience were present, Dickens writes on April 28: "the scenery, furniture, etc., are rapidly advancing towards completion, and will be beautiful. The dresses are a perfect blaze of colour, and there is not a pocket-flap or a scrap of lace that has not been made according to Egg's drawings to the quarter of an inch. Every wig has been made from an old print or picture. From the Duke's snuff-box to Wills' coffee-house, you will find everything in perfect truth and keeping."

In the latter part of the year there was a provincial tour, when some changes were made in the cast.

This Guild of Literature and Art appears to us now-a-days to have been a somewhat undignified and crazy project, which achieved the failure that it deserved. Dickens and Lord Lytton were the prime moving spirits in the affair, which certainly cannot have added to the dignity of men of letters in the eyes of a prosaic world. Lytton gave a plot of ground at Stevenage, in Hertford-

THE EARL OF LYTTON.

From the Sketch by "Alfred Croquis" (D. Maclise, R.A.).

shire for the projected "alms-houses," as well as providing "Not so Bad As We Seem."

The money accruing from these performances went to build a semi-almshouse, semi-college, based on the plan of that of the Home of the Turkey Merchants, Morden College, at Blackheath, but the funds were not sufficient to carry out the whole scheme. Of Lytton at this time, Hollingshead says that he "was not one of those men who had the art of growing old with grace. He had a keen, Jewish look, and would have made an imposing figure in a synagogue. Outside in a garden, in the bright sunshine, with all his 'make-up'—the remnant of his 'dandy days,' which he had never altogether turned his back upon—he was only imposing for his talent and literary reputation."

Sir John R. Robinson, so long and so worthily connected with the *Daily News*, gave in the "Cornhill Magazine" a very graphic description of Dickens presiding over a meeting of the Guild:—"I can easily figure him in the thick of the work; writing a play, acting in it, bringing men together, some with a command, some with an intimation that they *were* in it; here a joke, there a pathetic touch. His smile was enough; Gradgrind could not hold out against Charles Dickens. . . . As a chairman he was as precise and accurate in carrying out the traditions of the post. Before business began, his happy laugh rang through the room; he had a word for every friend, and generally they were his associates as well as friends. Voices were high in merriment, and it looked as though business would never begin; but when Mr Dickens did take his seat, 'Now, gentlemen, Wills will read us the minutes of the last meeting. Attention, please. Order!' it might have been the most experienced

chairman of the Guildhall, purpled by a hundred public dinners."

Sir John relates later on, "On reaching Wellington Street one day to attend a council meeting, I found Mr Dickens alone. Though he was always most kind to me . . . I felt rather alarmed, for I knew he would insist on business being done. The minute-book records three resolutions as having been passed at that meeting. We waited a while, talking about things in the papers, and then Mr Dickens, in an inimitably funny way, remarked: 'Will you move me into the chair?' 'I will,' I answered, 'I know you can be trusted to keep order in a large gathering.' Then came resolutions, carried after discussion; little speeches in the imitated voice of absent members, the appropriate gravity never departed from. My share was insignificant, but it served to supply Mr Dickens with hints and texts to keep the fun going."

XXVIII

WILKIE COLLINS

OF Wilkie Collins, who will make further appearances in these pages, it now behoves us to say somewhat. William Wilkie, to give him his full name, was the eldest son of William Collins, the painter, and the elder brother of Charles Allston Collins—whom we shall meet later on—and was born in the year 1824 in Tavistock Square. He was called after his father's old friend Sir David Wilkie. His early travels with his parents in Italy supplied him with material for his first novel "Antonina," which work so pleased his father that he was freed from "durance vile" in the tea-warehouse in which he had been employed. Of his first coming into contact with Dickens the following is the record. On February 10, 1851, Dickens wrote asking W. H. Wills to take a small part in "Not So Bad As We Seem." Wills could not or would not, so Dickens reminded Egg that he had said that Wilkie Collins would be glad to play any part in the piece and suggested for him the character proposed to Wills. "Will you undertake," he wrote, "to ask him if I shall cast him in this part? . . . I knew his father well, and should be very glad to know him."

In 1849 a landscape of his was hung at the Royal Academy, and "Antonina" was published in 1850. He was a skilful painter of landscape. Holman Hunt

states that in his early days he had thought of being an artist, and describes him in 1851 thus :—" He was a man now, slight of build, about five feet six inches in height, with an impressive head, the cranium being noticeably more prominent on the right side than on the left, which inequality did not amount to a disfigurement ; perhaps indeed it gave a stronger impression of intellectual power. He was redundant in pleasant temperament. . . ."

He was highly gifted socially, blessed with unbounded good humour and with a happy facility for relating good stories. He was fond of foreign travel, including trips to Paris ; was a *bon vivant*. A friend tells us that he gained his impulse to write fiction from the perusal of French novels, the art of which appealed strongly to him. From the same source we gain two anecdotes which throw light upon his habits. He was not a punctual man ; Dickens was, and had not only ordained that breakfast should be at nine o'clock, but that those who were late for it might, or rather should, ' go without.' The result was that once when staying at Boulogne with Dickens, Collins was discovered breakfasting in solitary state at the Casino off *pâté de foie gras !* Convivial customs were more honoured in the observance than the breach in those days. At a christening party Collins arrived very late, after an *excellent* dinner. The happy infant was produced by the mother for his admiration ; Collins steadied himself, looked solemnly at it, and said, " Ah ! Child's drunk. He's *very* drunk ! "

Rudolf Lehmann tells us that " in his moments of good health he used to be a ready, amiable talker, but unfortunately they were rare. He had found laudanum most efficacious in soothing his excruciating nervous pains. Like the tyrant of old who, to make himself

proof against being poisoned, swallowed a daily increased portion of poison, Wilkie had gradually brought himself, not only to be able, but absolutely to require, a daily quantity of laudanum a quarter of which would have been sufficient to kill any ordinary person."

It was he who said of Forster's "Life" that it was "the Life of John Forster, with occasional Anecdotes of Charles Dickens," a cynicism with just sufficient semblance of truth to give it stinging power.

Holman Hunt writes of him about 1860, "No one could be more jolly than he as the lord of the feast in his own house, where the dinner was prepared by a *chef*, the wines plentiful, and the cigars of the choicest brand. The talk became rollicking and the most sedate joined in the hilarity; laughter long and loud crossed from opposite ends of the room and all went home brimful of good stories."

He sometimes would burst out, "Ah! you might well admire that masterpiece; it was done by that great painter Wilkie Collins, and it put him so completely at the head of landscape painters that he determined to retire from the profession in compassion for the rest," and so on in good-humoured chaff of himself.

Motley describes him—at a dinner at Forster's in 1861—as "a little man, with black hair, a large white forehead, large spectacles, and small features. He is very unaffected, vivacious, and agreeable."

The following amusing story is told anent Dickens's fondness for clothes more "coloured" than "plain":—A well-known artist was one day made a present of a very gorgeous piece of stuff, and was puzzled as to what use he could put it. "Oh, send it to Dickens," said Wilkie Collins, "he'll make a waistcoat of it."

He died in 1889. Whether his novels will live is a matter which future generations only can determine, but the past and passing generations Wilkie Collins helped to spend many hours pleasantly over the pages of "The Moonstone," " The Woman in White," and other tales distinguished chiefly for the clever contrivance of their plots.

XXIX

OTHER FRIENDS

TO draw the portraits, even in miniature, of all the friends of Charles Dickens would call for many volumes; to some only can these pages, therefore, give attention, and those picked out at random rather than of deliberate selection, though we have chiefly chosen those who taken together may be said to be representative. It would indeed be a foolish undertaking to write of all those who formed the wide circle of Dickens's friends and acquaintances; we confine our attention principally to those upon whom we may fairly infer that he had an influence or who influenced him. It need scarcely be repeated that he was a hospitable man, delighting in seeing his friends and family happy around him.

At the close of 1847 he discovered to his surprise and regret that the lease of the Devonshire Terrace house had but two years more to run, and it is for the most part with the "other friends" of the Devonshire Terrace days that these pages next following will deal.

We must retell a pleasant anecdote from the pages of Forster, of how he, Dickens, Talfourd, Edwin Landseer and Stanfield sallied forth one summer evening in 1849 to see the *Battle of Waterloo*, at Astley's "over the water," when whom should they see going in to witness the performance but the "Duke" himself, with Lady

Douro and the little Ladies Ramsay, and all the good folk cheering him heartily. Forster's party do not seem to have found the entertainment entertaining, and Talfourd was heard to express a fervent wish that " the Prussians would come up."

The Carlyles were among Dickens's firmest friends, and it is quite delightful to know that when Dickens inquired after the sage's health he replied that he was a lorn, lone creature and everything went contrary with him. It is not called for here to set forth again the events of Carlyle's life; we may content ourselves with gaining some sight of him as he came into contact with others who figure in these pages, and with the endeavour to show somewhat of the happier side of his marriage, which recent works have too greatly obscured or underrated.

We gain a glimpse of Leigh Hunt house-hunting with Carlyle in 1834 in Chelsea; " Hunt gave me dinner, a pipe even and glass of ale; was the blithest, helpfullest, most loquacious of men; yet his talk only fatigued me vastly; there was much, much of it; full of airiness indeed, yet with little but scepticising quibbles, crotchets, fancies, and even Cockney wit, which I was all too earnest to relish."

Carlyle first met Dickens at a dinner at the Stanleys' in Dover Street, in March, 1840:—" Pickwick, too, was of the same dinner party, though they did not seem to heed him over-much. He is a fine little fellow—Boz, I think. Clear blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches amazingly, large protrusive rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme *mobility*, which he shuttles about —eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose

coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed *à la* D'Orsay rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest a quiet, shrewd-looking, little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and what others are."

Lady Ritchie thus describes Mrs Carlyle, and a visit with her father to Cheyne Row: "In the dining-room stood that enchanting screen covered with pictures, drawings, prints, fashions, portraits, without end, which my father liked so much; upstairs was the panelled drawing-room with its windows to the Row, and the portrait of Oliver Cromwell hanging opposite the windows. But best of all, there was Mrs Carlyle herself, a living picture; Gainsborough should have been alive to paint her; slim, bright, dark-eyed, upright, in her place. She looked like one of the grand ladies our father used sometimes to take us to call upon. She used to be handsomely dressed in velvet and point lace. She sat there at leisure, and prepared for conversation. She was not familiar, but cordial, dignified, and interested in everything as she sat installed in her corner of the sofa by one of the little tables covered with nick-nacks of silver and mother-of-pearl." And she said, "If you wish for a quiet life, never you marry a dyspeptic man of genius."

One of the most curious references to Carlyle is in a letter of Charles Sumner, of June 14, 1838: "I heard Carlyle lecture the other day; he seemed like an inspired boy; truth and thoughts that made one move on the benches came from his apparently unconscious mind, couched in the most grotesque style, and yet condensed to a degree of intensity . . . childlike in manner and feeling."

Turn where we will, however, read what opinion of him we may, there always is seen beneath the rough exterior the sincerity and genuine goodness of the man; of him, as Goldsmith said of Johnson, it may truly be said that there was nothing of the bear about him but the skin. He and his wife called on Lady Eastlake, then Miss Rigby, in 1844, of which visit she records, "Mr Carlyle called, bringing with him his wife—certainly a more refined half; but he is an honest, true man, a character such as he himself can alone describe. He is a kind of Burns in appearance—the head of a thinker, the eye of a lover, and the mouth of a peasant. His colours, too, seem to have been painted on his high cheek-bones at the plough's tail." Later she writes of him, "the best laugh I ever heard. . . . He has the thinnest possible surface over his mind; you can get through it at once. . . . Mrs Carlyle interested me; she is lively and clever, and evidently very happy."

Mrs Browning in 1851 writes of Carlyle, "you come to understand perfectly when you know him, that his bitterness is only melancholy, and his scorn, sensibility. Highly picturesque, too, he is in conversation; the talk of writing men is very seldom so good."

From Forster in August, 1848, the Carlyles received "an invaluable treat; an opera box namely, to hear Jenny Lind sing farewell. Illustrious indeed. We dined with Fuz [1] at five, the hospitablest of men; at eight, found the Temple of the Muses all a-shine for Lind & Co., —the piece, *La Somnambula*, a chosen bit of nonsense from beginning to end,—and, I suppose, an audience of some three thousand *expensive*-looking fools male and female come to see this Swedish Nightingale 'hop the

[1] Forster.

twig,' as I phrased it. . . . 'Depend upon it,' said I to Fuz, 'the Devil is busy *here* to-night, wherever he may be idle!'—Old Wellington had come staggering in to attend the thing. Thackeray was there; D'Orsay, Lady Blessington,—to all of whom (Wellington excepted!) I had to be presented and give some kind of foolery,—much against the grain."

But a dyspeptic man of genius, or indeed a dyspeptic gifted with stupidity for the matter of that, does not make a husband whose ways will tend toward a quiet life, but we see no reason for overstating the unhappinesses that arose in the Carlyles' lives, or to doubt that beneath the surface storms there was a great depth of content and joy. We will take three extracts from Professor Masson's very pleasant book, "Memories of London in the Forties." Of Mrs Carlyle he says:—"Her conversation, which was more free and abundant than it probably would have been had Carlyle been there, impressed me greatly. She had, as I found then, and as is proved by some of her now published letters, a real liking for Robertson, though apt to make fun of him when opportunity offered; and Robertson's energetic ways had always an inspiring effect on people he was with, drawing them out admirably and starting topics. At all events I shall never forget the first impression made upon me by the appearance of this remarkable lady as she sat, or rather reclined, in a corner of the sofa, talking to the burly Robertson, herself so fragile in form, with delicately cut and rather pained face of pale hue, very dark hair, smoothed on both sides of an unusually broad forehead, and large, soft lustrous eyes of gypsy black. Something in her face and expression, then and afterwards, would occasionally remind me of

portraits I had seen of the Young Voltaire; and the brilliance of her conversation, and even the style of it, bore out the resemblance. She was, indeed, one of the most brilliant of the witty talkers, full of light esprit, and though generally suppressing herself when her husband was present, quite as delightfully copious as he was both in theme and words when she had to be his substitute. Though her style and manner of thinking had undoubtedly been influenced by him, an original difference had been preserved. Her most characteristic vein was the satirical; within this, the form to which she tended most was satirical narrative; and the narratives in which she most excelled were stories of things that had recently happened to herself or within the circle of her acquaintance."

Of Carlyle he draws this portrait :—

"More vivid in my memory now than the matter of the talk is the impression made on me by Carlyle's powerful head and face; the hair then dark and thick, without a sign of grizzle, the complexion a strong bilious ruddy, the brow over-hanging and cliff-like, the eyes deep sunk and aggressive, and the firm mouth and chin then closely shaven. All in all, with his lean, erect figure, then over five feet eleven inches in height, and the peculiar bilious ruddy of his face, he was, apart from the fire of genius in his eyes and flowing through his talk, not unlike some Scottish farmer or other rustic of unusually strong and wiry constitution, living much in the open air. His Annandale accent contributed to the resemblance. His vocabulary and grammar were of the purest and most stately English; and the Scotticism, which was very marked, was wholly in the pronunciation and intonation. Like Scotsmen generally, from whatever

district of Scotland, he enunciated each syllable of every word with a deliberation and emphasis unusual with English speakers, giving each, as it were, a good bite before letting it go. The West Border intonation was intensified, in his case, by a peculiarity which was either wholly his own, or a special characteristic of the Carlyles of Ecclefechan. He spoke always with a distinct lyrical chaunt; not the monotonous and whining sing-song, mainly of pulpit origin, one hears occasionally among Scotsmen, and which is suggestive too often of hypocrisy and a desire to cheat you, but a bold and varying chaunt, as of a man not ashamed to let his voice rise and fall, and obey by instinctive modulation every flexure of his meaning and feeling. Mrs Carlyle had caught something of this lyrical chaunt, by sympathy and companionship; and the slighter Scotticism of her voice was distinguished also by a pleasant habit of lyrical rise and cadence."

The Professor sums up, too leniently perchance, but a pleasant corrective to the corrosive of Froude :—

" My now far-back London memories of the year 1844 include some of my pleasant reminiscences of the demeanour of this famous couple to each other in their domestic privacy. It was uniformly exemplary and loving in all essential respects, with a kind of stately gallantry on Carlyle's part when he turned to his Jane, or she interposed one of her remarks; and on her part the most admiring affection for him in all that he said or did. If there was ever a ruffle, it was superficial merely, and arose from an occasional lapse of his into a mood of playful teasing and persistence of rhetorical mastery even against her. . . . She was fond of entertaining her friends with sprightly stories of any recent misbehaviour of his, and on such occasions he would listen most benignantly

and approvingly, with the pleased look of a lion whose lioness was having her turn in the performance. How different this from the picture drawn by Froude of Mrs. Carlyle as a kind of intellectual Cinderella, the patient drudge of a literary Diogenes whose barkings at the human race were only relieved by croakings about his health."

After her death, Monckton Milnes records that Carlyle said to him: "She wrapped me round like a cloak, to keep all the hard and cold world off me. . . . When I came home, sick with mankind, there she was on the sofa, always with a cheerful story of something or somebody, and I never knew that she, poor darling! had been fighting with bitter pains all day. . . . She had never a mean thought or word from the day I first saw her looking like a flower out of the window of her mother's old brick house, my Jeanie, my queen." Milnes' own judgment — and he knew them both intimately — was "that they were about as happy together as married people of strong characters and temperaments usually are."

Charles Buller once said a delightful thing to Carlyle :— "I often think how puzzled your Maker must be to account for your conduct."

Before turning to others it will interest those who believe that they can trace the gradual acquirement by Carlyle of his extraordinary style to ponder over this curious statement of Lord Jeffrey, in reply to a remark made by Charles Sumner that Carlyle had changed his style since he wrote the essay on Burns, "Not at all, I will tell you why that is different from his other articles: *I altered it.*"

We will now turn to Monckton Milnes, whom we have quoted above, and who was one of the most delightful

familiars of this circle. In more ways than one he may be said to have succeeded to the mantle of Rogers; he was a rich man, he was a minor poet, he was a wit and he entertained his friends to breakfast. He had "breakfasted" with Rogers, and himself instituted similar functions in his Pall Mall chambers, where he acquired the fame of "always bringing out some society curiosity." It almost seems that the only qualification necessary in a guest was notoriety, for Sir Henry Taylor relates that at one of his breakfasts an inquiry was made as to whether a certain murderer had been hanged that morning, which drew the remark from the host's sister, "I hope so, or Richard will have him at his breakfast-party next Thursday." Carlyle writes in 1831, "I had designed to be at one of your breakfasts again this season, and see once more with eyes what the felicity of life is."

When the question of a pension for Tennyson was being discussed, Carlyle said to Milnes, who was calling at Cheyne Row, "Richard Milnes, when are you going to get that pension for Alfred Tennyson?"

"My dear Carlyle, the thing is not so easy as you seem to suppose. What will my constituents say if I do get the pension for Tennyson? They know nothing about him or his poetry, and they will probably think he is some poor relation of my own, and that the whole affair is a job."

To which Carlyle responded,

"Richard Milnes, on the Day of Judgment, when the Lord asks you why you didn't get that pension for Alfred Tennyson, it will not do to lay the blame on your constituents; it is *you* that will be damned."

In his entertaining "The Life, Letters and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton,"

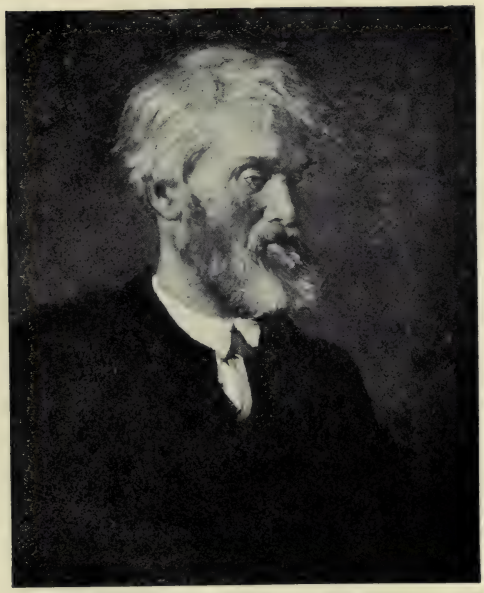
Sir Wemyss Reid writes: "Never, indeed, was there a more delightful host than Milnes. Whether his guests were famous or obscure, whether they belonged to the great world or had merely for the moment emerged from the masses, they could not be long in his company without feeling the charm of his manner, and being warmed and attracted by the tenderness of his heart. His fame as a talker was world-wide. . . . But to hear Milnes at his best, it was necessary to meet him at the breakfast-table. . . . It is with a great sadness indeed that those who often had the privilege of meeting him in this fashion in his own home must recall those breakfasts, absolutely informal and unpretending, but made memorable by the choice treasures of wit, of paradox, of playful sarcasm, and of an apparently inexhaustible store of reminiscences, which Milnes offered to his guests"; and of his house at Fryston, "No record, alas! remains of the talk with which the pleasant rooms of Fryston rang in the days when their master was entertaining men and women as distinguished as those whose names I have given. The many good sayings, the shrewd views of individuals and affairs, the stores of out-of-the-way incidents in history, have all sunk into silence; but so long as any live who were privileged to partake of those hospitalities, and to witness those meetings of men and women of genius, their memory cannot fade, and the name of Fryston will be cherished in the innermost recesses of the heart."

A wit is distinguished from a mere merry-maker by his wisdom, just as a wise man is from a philosopher by his wit; so it will not be *mal-à-propos* to quote a few of the *dicta* of Monckton Milnes.

"What a rare thing is a grown-up mind!"

JANE WELSH CARLYLE.

From the Painting by Samuel Laurence, in the National Portrait Gallery. Photograph by Emery Walker.



THOMAS CARLYLE.

From the Painting by G. F. Watts, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery.

"No wonder we were friends, for we had found ourselves in a moral quarantine together."

"He lost both dinners and flattery, both his bread and his butter."

"I really have not room to pity everybody—I'm not God Almighty."

"God has given us the gift of Faith, it is true, but He has given us the gift of Doubt as well."

"I can be humble enough, but, alas! I always *know* that I am so."

"Good conversation is to ordinary talk what whist is to playing cards," or we will add "bridge."

An amusing story is told of him in his old age. After a dinner, a young lady thought to pay him a pretty and pleasing compliment by singing his song, "The Beating of my own Heart." He went peacefully to sleep, only arousing himself for a moment when her memory failed her to supply the missing word. He had, also, the happy gift of being able to sleep soundly through dull after-dinner speeches.

Sir Wemyss Reid gives an amusing letter from Wilkie Collins to Mrs Milnes:

"12, HARLEY STREET, W., *May 17th*, 1862.

"DEAR MRS MILNES,—I have always had a foreign tendency to believe in *Fate*. That tendency has now settled into a conviction. Fate sits on the doorstep at 16, Upper Brook Street, and allows all your guests the happiness of accepting your hospitality with the one miserable exception of the Doomed Man who writes this letter. When your kindness opened the door to me on the occasion of your 'At Home,' Fate closed it again, using as the instrument of exclusion a neuralgic attack

in my head. Quinine and patience help me to get the better of this, and Mrs Milnes (with an indulgence which I am penitently conscious of not having deserved) offers me a second chance. Fate, working with a postman for an instrument on this occasion, sends me a dinner invitation for Thursday, the 22nd, one day before I receive Mrs Milnes's kind note. No guardian angel warns me to pause. I accept the invitation, and find myself engaged to dine on the 22nd, *not* in London, for I might then have asked permission to come to Brook Street in the evening, but at Richmond, where there is no help for me.

"I think this 'plain statement' really makes out my case. I have not the audacity to ask you to accept my apologies. My aspirations are limited to presenting myself as a fit object for your compassion. The ancients, in any emergency, were accustomed to mollify Fate by a sacrifice. I am quite ready to try the experiment. If I presented myself on the doorstep of your house with a portable altar, a toga, a live sheep, and a sacrificial knife, would it be convenient? I fear not. A crowd might collect; the Animals' Protection Society might interfere at the moment of divination, and Mr Milnes might be subjected to annoying inquiries in the House of Commons. My only resource left is to ask you to exercise the Christian privilege of forgiveness, and to assure you that I deserve it, by being really, and not as a figure of speech, very sorry."

Parry the "entertainer," prototype of Corney Grain and George Grossmith, was a firm friend of these days. John Orlando Parry was born in London in the year 1810, the only son of John Parry, the well-known Welsh composer. He was a "prodigy," appearing at the age

of fifteen as a harpist, but his future lay in his voice, a rich baritone, and his sense of fun. After spending some time in Italy, where he was the pupil of Lablache, he returned to England in 1834. Two years later he made his appearance on the stage of the St James's Theatre under John Braham, later on singing in "The Village Coquettes," written by Dickens, with music by John Hullah. After various experiences as a concert singer, he produced at the Store Street Music Hall, near Bedford Square, an "entertainment" written by Albert Smith, "Notes Vocal and Instrumental," illustrated by large water-colour drawings executed by himself. He had now found his *genre*. In 1860 he joined the famous German Reeds at the Gallery of Illustration in Regent Street. He was certainly an "all round" performer, writing his songs, composing his music, singing and accompanying himself.

Of another very famous singer we catch occasional glimpses. Not any other tenor has ever so firmly won and for so long held the affections of the British public as did John Sims Reeves, who, born in 1818, lived on to the end of the century. Edmund Yates tells the story of his successful appearance in opera at Drury Lane in 1847, under the management of the great "Mons" Jullien, when the orchestra was under the conductorship of no less a person than Hector Berlioz; "the first production was *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the next day the town was ringing with the praises of the new tenor, Mr Sims Reeves, who had proved himself more than worthy of the great expectations which had been raised concerning him. I perfectly recollect the tumultuous roars of applause evoked by his great scene at the end of the second act, and have a remembrance of roars

of another kind, occasioned by the very comic manner in which, under the influence of great excitement, he persisted in shaking his head. His 'Fra Poco'—rendered, I remember, 'From these fond arms they tore thee'—was enormously effective; and when the curtain fell, Mr Sims Reeves was enrolled as a first favourite with the public, which for more than thirty-five years [1] has never deserted him."

It will be within the memory of many that Sims Reeves attained an unenviable celebrity for disappointing the public. At a certain function Dickens, who was in the chair, had to announce that Sims Reeves was unfortunately unable to be present owing to a throat attack and, therefore, that his promised song would not be forthcoming. The news was received with incredulous laughter by some sceptical and ill-mannered guests. Dickens, very angry, added to his statement:—"My friend, Mr Sims Reeves, regrets his inability to fulfil his engagement owing to an unfortunately amusing and highly facetious cold." Many a time, indeed, did this great singer disappoint an expectant audience, but never, so a personal friend of his has told us, without real cause; his throat was highly delicate and sensitive, and he has even been present, ready and willing, in the artists' room, but at the last moment could not sing; the spirit willing, but the flesh weak.

Charles Kemble and his daughters were among Dickens's very good friends, a courtly, handsome old man, but deaf withal, for it is related of him that at the Garrick Club during a terrific thunderstorm he mildly remarked, "I think we are going to have some thunder; I feel it in my knees." Leigh Hunt wrote of him, "Were

[1] Written in 1884.

he not personally gifted as he is, it would be a sad thing to lose the last of the Kembles from Covent Garden—to look in vain for the living and vigorous representative of that truly noble house which has laid on us all a great debt of gratitude, and with which he seemed still to connect us. John Kemble and Mrs Siddons had not quite left this their proper seat while he remained there, for we had associated him with them in their most signal triumphs, to which he lent all the grace and vigour of youth, which were theirs no longer . . . he was endowed with rich and various faculties, which can be found in no one else in the same perfection and harmony. Where now shall we seek the high Roman fashion of look, and gesture, and attitude? Where shall old chivalry retain her living image, and high thoughts, 'seated in a heart of courtesy,' have adequate expression? Where shall the indignant honesty of a young patriot spirit 'show fiery off'? Whither shall we look for gentlemanly mirth, for gallant ease, for delicate raillery, and gay, glittering enterprise?"

In 1839 we find Charles Dickens writing, "I wish you would tell Mr Sydney Smith that of all the men I ever heard of and never saw, I have the greatest curiosity to see and the greatest interest to know him."

He did see and know the witty canon of St Paul's, whom all men honoured for his upright manliness. He was another Doughty Street man, taking up his residence there at No. 8 in 1804, when he was evening preacher at the Foundling Hospital with a stipend of £50 per annum. Many another London house is connected with his name, but we only need mention two. In 1806 he was in Orchard Street, Oxford Street, and Lady Holland says:—"the pleasantest society at his house was to be found in the

little suppers which he established once a week; giving a general invitation to about twenty or thirty persons, who used to come as they pleased. . . . At these suppers there was no attempt at display, nothing to tempt the palate; but they were most eagerly sought after, and were I to begin enumerating the guests usually to be found there, no one would wonder that they were so."

When he was given a "stall" in St Paul's in 1809, he writes:—"I have just taken possession of my preferment. The house is in Amen Corner,—an awkward name on a card, and an awkward annunciation to the coachman on leaving any fashionable mansion. I find too (sweet discovery!) that I give a dinner, every Sunday for three months in the year, to six clergymen and six singing-men, at one o'clock."

Of his wit these pages have already given samples; we add but two more:—when advised by his doctor to take a walk upon an empty stomach, he solemnly asked "Whose?" We like, too, his remark, "What a pity it is that in England we have no amusements but vice and religion."

Another Doughty Street personality:—

Charles William Shirley Brooks was born on April 29, 1815, at number 52, being the eldest son of William Brooks and Elizabeth Sabine. As a young man he was distinctly a good-looking fellow—how many of the young literary lions of those days seem to have been handsome!—with well-cut features, bright eyes concerning whose colour evidence is contradictory, and hands and feet of which he was not a little proud. Says Edmund Yates of him at a much later date, "Even at the last, when his hair was silvery-white and his beard grizzled, he retained his freshness, which, combined with his hearty, genial

manner, his appreciation of, and promptitude to enter into, fun, made him look considerably younger than his real age. He was hearty and hospitable, fond of dining at the dinners of rich City companies, where he would make excellent speeches; fond of enjoying the company of a friend at the Garrick Club, or at a corner table in a coffee-room at one of the old hotels in Covent Garden."

There was Peter, the son of Allan, Cunningham, who earned the eternal gratitude of all lovers of London and students of its history by his "Hand-Book of London. Past and Present." He was a scholar and a good fellow. There was Henry Fothergill Chorley, the critic, to whom a newspaper writer who had lost both his manners and his temper once pleasingly referred as "the Chorleys and the *chawbacons* of literature." We meet him again in the Gad's Hill days; there he was a frequent and most welcome visitor; good company he seems to have been, a walker of great powers despite his "apparently weak physique"; always ready for a game or a romp or a charade. Miss Dickens describes him as "doing all sorts of good and generous deeds in a quiet, unostentatious way."

Charles Knight, of whom Shirley Brooks said, "it is an honour to have been his friend." He lives in history as one of the pioneers of cheap literature for what was then called "the masses." He was a man of quick temper, but never morose; in appearance strong, of middle height and with well-cut features.

Dickens, as did so many others, owned to a real affection for the Procter family, "our dear good Procter" he calls "Barry Cornwall," whom Forster somewhat exuberantly dubs "a poet as genuine as old Fletcher or Beaumont." We hear of Dickens coming up from Gad's Hill to help to celebrate the poet's eighty-second

birthday. Lord Byron and Sir Robert Peel had been among his schoolmates at Harrow; he had known Keats, Lamb, Shelley, Coleridge, Landor, Leigh Hunt, and Rogers; he was a poet and a friend of poets. He died in October, 1874, aged eighty-seven.

Charles Sumner writes of him in 1839, he "is about forty-two or forty-five, and is a conveyancer by profession. His days are spent in the toilsome study of abstracts of titles; and when I saw him last Sunday, at his house, he was poring over one which press of business had compelled him to take home.

"He is a small, thin man, with a very dull countenance, in which, nevertheless,—knowing what he has written,—I could detect the 'poetical frenzy.' His manner is gentle and quiet, and his voice low. He thought if he could live life over again he would be a gardener. . . . Mrs Procter is a sweet person; she is the daughter of my friend, Mrs Basil Montagu, and has much of her mother's information and intelligence."

"Dined at Procter's in the summer of 1859," Hawthorne relates, "to meet Charles Sumner, Leigh Hunt, J. T. Fields, 'Eothen' Kinglake and others." Fields thus describes the scene: "Adelaide Procter did not reach home in season to begin the dinner with us, but she came later in the evening, and sat for some time in earnest talk with Hawthorne. It was a 'goodly companie,' long to be remembered. As the twilight deepened around the table, which was exquisitely decorated with flowers, the author of 'Rimini' recalled to Procter's recollection other memorable tables where they used to meet in vanished days with Lamb, Coleridge, and others of their set long since passed away. . . . I cannot remember all the good things I heard that day. . . . Hunt . . .

speaking of Landor's oaths . . . said 'They are so rich, they are really nutritious.'"

J. T. Fields called on him in 1869 and found him feeble, but kindly and genial, "his speech was somewhat difficult to follow, for he had been slightly paralyzed not long before . . . he spoke with warm feeling of Longfellow, who had been in London during that season, and had called to see his venerable friend. . . . 'Wasn't it good of him,' said the old man, in his tremulous voice, 'to think of *me* before he had been in town twenty-four hours?'"

"In the spring of the year 1853," writes Dickens, "I observed a short poem among the proffered contributions,[1] very different, as I thought, from the shoal of verses perpetually setting through the office of such a periodical." It was not until the Christmas of the following year that he discovered that his contributor "Mary Berwick" was none other than Adelaide Anne Procter, the eldest child of his old friend, known to us to-day as the authoress of "Legends and Lyrics." Hawthorne called her "the lovely daughter of Barry Cornwall."

She was born in Bedford Square on October 30, 1825, and early showed a fondness for poetry. She was cheerful, full of fun and humour, laughter ever ready. She lay dying, with sweetest patience, fifteen long months.

"At length, at midnight on the second of February, 1864, she turned down a leaf of a little book she was reading, and shut it up.

"The ministering hand . . . was soon around her neck, and she quietly asked, as the clock was on the stroke of one:

"'Do you think I am dying, mamma?'

[1] To "All the Year Round."

" ' I think you are very, very ill to-night, my dear.'

" ' Send for my sister. My feet are so cold. Lift me up ! '

" Her sister entering as they raised her, she said : ' It has come at last ! ' and with a bright and happy smile, looked upward, and departed."

Is not that truly Dickensian ?

Thackeray writes to her in June, 1860, " Why are your verses so very, very grey and sad ? . . . I don't like to think you half so sad as your verses. I like some of them very much indeed, especially the little tender bits."

" The first and only time I met Miss Adelaide Procter, of poetic fame, was at Eastlake's," [1] writes Frith, " and I had the pleasure of taking her down to dinner. Miss Procter was very charming, but nature had been very unkind to her in respect of personal appearance. I fear it could not be denied that the authoress of the ' Lost Chord,' and so many other beautiful poems, was a very plain person indeed, but her conversation was delightful. Photography, at the time of which I am speaking, was a new art ; the conversation turned upon it at dinner, and, as I looked at Miss Procter, I thought how fearfully she would suffer if she ventured to submit herself to its uncompromising ' justice without mercy ' treatment. As if she read my thoughts, she said :

" ' I had my photograph taken the other day, and you never saw such an ugly wretch as they made of me.'

" I forget what I said in reply, but I muttered something, and the lady continued :

" ' I remonstrated with the man, and what do you think he said ?—' Very sorry, miss, but we can't alter nature.' "

Tom Taylor was a frequent visitor ; Hawthorne says

[1] Sir Charles Eastlake, P.R.A.

of him—" a humorous way of showing up men and matters, but without originality or much imagination or dance of fancy," and again—" liked him very well this evening; but he is a gentleman of very questionable aspect,—un-English, tall, slender, colourless, with a great beard of soft black, and, methinks, green goggles over his eyes."

The last of the friends with whom we shall deal here, and among the less known now to fame, were Mr and Mrs Milner-Gibson. Of Thomas Milner-Gibson we need only note that he was one of Lord Beaconsfield's schoolmates at Higham; that after serving as the Conservative member for Ipswich, he became one of the strongest supporters of the Anti-Corn Law League, a Liberal and President of the Board of Trade under Palmerston and Russell. In January, 1870, Dickens rented his house, 5 Hyde Park Place, nearly opposite the Marble Arch. The Milner-Gibson suppers were a great " institution," where were to be met—mentioning chiefly those whose names appear in our pages—Mazzini, Planché, Sir Charles and Lady Eastlake, Monckton Milnes, Albert and Arthur Smith, Landseer, Leech, Chorley, the Procters, and Mr and Mrs Charles Dickens. " It was no mere affair of small-talk," says Edmund Yates, " ices, and lemonade. A substantial supper was a feature of the evening, and the foreigners had a pleasant way of rushing down directly that meal was served and sweeping the table. It was here that Leech, returning flushed from an encounter with the linkman, told me laughingly he would not have minded if ' Mr Leech's carriage ' had been called, but that the fellow would roar out, ' The keb from Nottin' 'Ill ! ' "

In Mr Layard's " The Life of Mrs Lynn Linton " there is an amusing account of Mrs Milner-Gibson's

penchant for spiritualism, and an interesting letter from Dickens to Mrs Linton, in which he says, referring to the then very popular *séances*, " I hold personal inquiry on my part into these proceedings to be out of the question for two reasons. Firstly, because the conditions under which such inquiries take place—as I know in the recent case of two friends of mine, with whom I discussed them —are preposterously wanting in the commonest securities against deceit or mistake. Secondly, because the people lie so very hard, both concerning what did take place and what impression it made at the time on the inquirer.

" Mr Hume, or Home (I rather think he has gone by both names), I take the liberty of regarding as an impostor. If he appeared on his own behalf in any controversy with me, I should take the further liberty of letting him know publicly why. But be assured that if he were demonstrated a humbug in every microscopic cell of his skin and globule of his blood, the disciples would still believe and worship.

" Mrs Gibson is an impulsive, compassionate, affectionate woman. But as to the strength of her head ;—would you be very much surprised by its making a mistake ? Did you never know it much mistaken in a person or two whom it devoutly believed in ?—Believe me ever faithfully your true friend,

CHARLES DICKENS."

XXX

TAVISTOCK HOUSE

IN 1851 Dickens left Devonshire Terrace, where he had lived since 1839, moving to Tavistock House, Tavistock Square, which he purchased, and which had previously been the home of his friend Frank Stone, the A.R.A., of whom we may say a few words. He was described to Frith by Dickens as "a better fellow than Stone never lived, but he is always in the right about every earthly thing, and if you talk till Doomsday you will never convince him to the contrary."

He was born in 1800 at Manchester, the son of a cotton-spinner, to which calling he himself was brought up, soon, however, turning to art, being entirely self-taught. In 1831 he came to London, and among his first work were pencil drawings for the "Book of Beauty." He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1837, and there is to be seen in his paintings much of the rather too sweet sentimentality which is characteristic of the productions of his son Marcus Stone. He was the friend of many literary men, among others of Rogers, Thackeray and Dickens, who makes Sairey Gamp speak of him as "a fine-looking, portly gentleman, with a face like an amiable full moon." He died in November, 1859, and was buried at Highgate. He was a tall, good-looking fellow. It is said that Mrs Frank Stone was born on the field of Waterloo, while the battle was in full swing!

There is a delightful story of him in "Leaves from a Life" :—"I have a picture in my gallery of Mr Stone's short way with a dreadful cook my mother had in the year of the great comet, 1858, when we were at Weymouth and Papa was detained in town. . . . Mama suspected the cook of theft, and was certain she drank, but was at her wit's end what to do. She confided in Mr Stone; he got a policeman in hiding, and then commanded the cook to pack her boxes and go. She must have suspected something, for they were packed, and all she had to do was to go to her room and assume her bonnet and shawl. The boxes were brought down, and then the policeman appeared, and to her rage and consternation demanded the keys. We were in the front room, divided from the other room by folding doors, and through the crack we commanded the whole scene, Mr Stone towering over cook and policeman alike, Mama and Mrs Stone cowering in a corner, while article after article came out of the boxes, some of them ours, more belonging evidently to former mistresses, and all obviously belonging to any one save the cook. Mama took her belongings, the policeman all that was marked with a coronet or a name, and finally she was on the point of being allowed to depart, without her wages, when Mr Stone, with a howl, leaped at her and turned her shawl back over her shoulders. Will it be believed that she was hung round with bags of groceries, and had a large bar of yellow soap under each arm? Even the policeman smiled, while we children simply roared with laughter, while the cook turned and fled, soap and all, and never came near us again!"

From the same pages we quote the account of his death :—"One morning in the autumn, Mrs Stone went downstairs to get him his breakfast, leaving him to read

the *Times*, and then get up quietly to his work when he had had some food. When she returned he was dead, his glasses still on his nose and the *Times* in his hand; he had simply 'fallen on sleep' without a cry or a movement. When the model came, to be sent away because Mr Stone was dead, she remarked, with all the inconsequence of her class, 'Well! he might 'a let me know!'"

At Tavistock House many additions and improvements were made by Dickens, concerning which there are highly entertaining letters to his brother-in-law Henry Austin, an architect, who was superintendent of "the works"; written from Broadstairs, where Dickens stayed from May until November. Of these we will quote but one:—

"My dear Henry, O! O! O! D—— the Pantechnicon. O! . . . The infamous —— says the stoves shall be fixed to-morrow. O! if this were to last long; the distraction of the new book, the whirling of the story through one's mind, escorted by workmen, the imbecility, the wild necessity of beginning to write, the not being able to do so, the, O! I should go —— O!

"P.S. None. I have torn it off."

But in November the workmen were out and the family in.

Holman Hunt gives a most interesting account of a visit he paid to Dickens at Tavistock House, which was brought about by their common friend Wilkie Collins:—

"He was then forty-eight years of age. By his early portraits he had appeared to be a good-looking beau of the last Georgian days, and the portrait painters had seized little that bespoke firmness under a light and cheerful exterior; but in these later days all the bones of his face showed, giving it truly statuesque dignity, and every line on his brow and face were the records

of past struggle and of present power to paint humanity in its numberless phases."

We now meet quite one of the most charming characters among Dickens's friends—Hans Christian Andersen, who we find writing from Copenhagen to a friend in London in 1846, " How I should like to shake the hand of ' Boz.' " He paid his first visit to London in 1847, putting up at the Sablonière Hotel, of which building at any rate a portion had once been Hogarth's house, and which was largely frequented by foreigners. It was pulled down in 1870, and the Tenison school now occupies the site. He arrived in the middle of June. He met Dickens at Lady Blessington's, whither he was taken by Jerdan—" I was yesterday at Lady Blessington's . . . a man came into the room . . . we took each other by the hand, looked into each other's eyes, and laughed for joy ; we knew each other so well, although this was our first meeting—it was Charles Dickens. . . . Outside the house is a pretty verandah which runs along its whole length . . . here we stood for a long time and talked—talked in English, but he understood me, and I him."

Lady Eastlake mentions a visit from Andersen in this year, when he was, " a long, thin, fleshless, boneless man, wriggling and bending like a lizard with a lantern-jawed, cadaverous visage. Simple and childlike, and *simpletonish* in his manner. We had a great deal of talk, and after so recently reading his life, he seems no stranger to me. His whole address and manner are irresistibly ludicrous." But second impressions were better ; a few days later we read, " Andersen dined with us. He had one stream of interesting talk—perhaps rather too much of himself, but to me that was novel and entertaining. . . . Altogether he left a most agreeable im-

pression on mind and heart; especially on the latter, for his own seemed so affectionate. No wonder he finds people kind; all stiffness is useless with him, as he is so evidently a simple child himself."

On his journey home he caught the Ostend boat from Ramsgate, *en route* dining with Dickens and his family at Broadstairs. Dickens saw him safely aboard:—"We pressed each other's hands, and he looked at me so kindly with his shrewd, sympathetic eyes, and as the ship went off, there he stood, waving his hat, and looking so gallant, so youthful, and so handsome. Dickens was the last who sent me a greeting from dear England's shore." Dickens wrote to him, "Come again to England, soon! But whatever you do, do not stop writing, because we cannot bear to lose a single one of your thoughts. They are too true and simply beautiful to be kept safe only in your own head."

In 1851 Andersen visited Dickens in Tavistock Square, and has given us an account of the house.

"In Tavistock Square stands Tavistock House. This and the strip of garden in front of it are shut out from the thoroughfare by an iron railing. A large garden with a grass plat and high trees stretches behind the house, and gives it a countrified look in the midst of this coal and gas-steaming London. In the passage from street to garden hung pictures and engravings. Here stood a marble bust of Dickens, so like him, so youthful and handsome; and over a bedroom door and a dining-room door were inserted the bas-reliefs of Night and Day, after Thorwaldsen. On the first floor was a rich library with a fireplace and a writing-table, looking out on the garden; and here it was that in winter Dickens and his friends acted plays to the satisfaction of all parties.

The kitchen was underground, and at the top of the house were the bedrooms. I had a snug room looking out on the garden; and over the tree-tops I saw the London towers and spires appear or disappear as the weather cleared or thickened."

In 1857 Andersen was a delighted and delightful visitor at Gad's Hill, arriving early in June and staying until the middle of July. He crossed from Calais to Dover, and rushed up to town in the mail train, and down again to Higham Station on the North Kent line, where he was greeted by a porter with "Are you the foreign gentleman who is going to Mr Dickens's?"

"Before me," he writes, "lay on the broad high road Dickens's country-house, whose tower, with its gilded weathercock, I had seen for some time over the tops of the trees. It was a handsome new house, with brick walls and a projecting entrance, supported by small pillars; a thick hedge of cherry-trees joined the house, in front of which was a carefully-tended grass-plot, in the rear two splendid cedar trees, whose crooked branches spread their green shade over a garden fenced in with ivy and wild grape. As I entered the house Dickens came to meet me, so happy, so cordial; he looked somewhat older than when we parted ten years before, but this was partly owing to the beard he wore; his eyes glistened as formerly, the same smile played round his mouth, the same clear voice sounded so cheerily, even more affectionate than heretofore. Dickens was now in his best years, so youthful, lively, eloquent, and rich in humour, through which the warmest cordiality ever shone. I cannot find more characteristic words to describe him than a quotation from the first letter I wrote home. 'Select the best of Charles Dickens's works, form from

them the image of a man, and you have Dickens.' Just as he stood before me in the first hour, he remained unchanged during all the weeks I passed with him, ever jovial, merry, and sympathising."

Of Miss Burdett Coutts Andersen gives a charming account :—" On my first stay at Gadshill I met there an elderly lady dressed in black and another younger ; they remained a week there, and were most amiable, straightforward, and kind ; we walked together up to the monument ; I drove with them to Rochester, and when they quitted us the younger lady said that I must stay at her house when I visited London. From Dickens I learned that she was Miss Coutts ; he spoke with the utmost veneration of her, and of the glorious Christian use to which she applied her enormous fortune ; I should have an opportunity of seeing an English mansion appointed with all possible wealth. I visited her, and it was not the rich pictures, the bedizened language, the palatial resources, which imparted to the house grandeur and a peculiar brilliancy, but the noble, feminine, amiable Miss Coutts herself, she offered such a simple and touching contrast to her richly-attired servants. She had noticed that I had felt cold while in the country ; it was not yet thoroughly warm, hence a fire burned cheerily in my chimney. How comfortable I felt then ! There were books, cozy arm-chairs, sofas, and rococco furniture, and from the window a perfect view over the garden of Piccadilly and the Green Park. Close to London are Miss Coutts's country-house and garden ; here are long alleys of rhododendrons, which shook their blue petals over the carriage in which I was seated ; here were magnificent cedars and rare exotics, while the hothouses were filled with tropical vegetation. From all these splendours

the owner led me to a small kitchen-garden, where she seemed fondest of being; it seemed as if these plants, which possessed such value for the poor, harmonised best with her nature."

Of some of the high-jinks at Tavistock House we must give a brief description.

Miss Mary Boyle describes a merry New Year's Eve :— "It seemed like a page cut out of the 'Christmas Carol,' as far, at least, as fun and frolic went: authors, actors, friends from near and far, formed the avenues of two long English country dances, in one of which I had the honour of going up and down the middle, almost 'interminably' as it seemed, with Charles Dickens for my partner. The Keeleys were there, husband and wife, the former declining to dance; but when Sir Roger de Coverley struck up, he was loudly called upon to do so, and a vehement dispute began between the two sets, which should secure him in their ranks. That inimitable comedian showed so much fun in the apparent hesitation of his choice as to elicit roars of laughter, which were followed by thunders of applause, when the winning side claimed Keeley as their own."

In 1854, on Twelfth Night, and in 1855, there were theatricals with the children as the "company," "supported" by a few grown-ups; Henry Fielding's burlesque "Tom Thumb" was one of the pieces performed, and "Fortunio" another. "Uncle" Mark Lemon was the giantess Glumdalca in the former, and Dickens the ghost of Gaffer Thumb. Thackeray, who was among the audience, rolled off his seat in uncontrollable laughter, so great was his amusement at one of the songs. In "Fortunio" Lemon appeared as the dragon, and Dickens as the irascible Baron. The "bill" contained many

funniments, such as the announcement of the "Re-engagement of that irresistible comedian Mr Ainger," and such names for the performers as Mr Passé (Dickens), Mr Mudperiod, Mr Measly Servile, and Mr Wilkini Collini.

Of the year 1855, Edmund Yates writes, "Visiting relations had . . . been established between us and the Dickens family, and we were invited to Tavistock House, on the 18th of June, to witness the performance of Wilkie Collins's drama, *The Lighthouse*, in which the author and Dickens, Frank Stone, Augustus Egg, Mark Lemon and the ladies of the family took part. My mother, who went with us, told me that Dickens, in intensity, reminded her of Lemaître in his best days. I was much struck by the excellence of Lemon's acting, which had about it no trace of the amateur. . . . It was a great night for my mother. She renewed her acquaintance with Stanfield and Roberts, and was addressed in very complimentary terms by the great John Forster. Thackeray and his daughters, Leech, Jerrold, Lord Campbell, and Carlyle were there."

Stanfield was the scene-painter, and Dickens, who was "Mr Crummles, lessee and manager," writes to him, "I have a little lark in contemplation, if you will help it to fly. Collins has done a melodrama (a regular old-style melodrama), in which there is a very good notion. . . . Now there is only one scene in the piece, and that, my tarry lad, is the inside of a lighthouse. . . . We mean to burst on an astonished world with the melodrama, without any note of preparation. So don't say a syllable to Forster if you should happen to see him."

After the show, "we then turned to at Scotch reels

(having had no exercise), and danced in the maddest way until five. . . ."

The most famous performance was the production of "The Frozen Deep," by Wilkie Collins, on Twelfth Night, 1857, the birthday of Charles Dickens the younger. In 1874, when the play was published as a story, Collins wrote in the introduction :—

"As long ago as the year 1856 I wrote a play called 'The Frozen Deep.'

"The work was first represented by amateur actors, at the house of the late Charles Dickens, on the 6th of January, 1857. Mr. Dickens himself played the principal part, and played it with a truth, vigour, and pathos never to be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to witness the performance. The other personages of the story were represented by the ladies of Mr. Dickens's family, by the late Mark Lemon (editor of *Punch*), by the late Augustus Egg, R.A. (the artist), and by the author of the play.

"The next appearance of 'The Frozen Deep' (played by the amateur company) took place at the Gallery of Illustration, Regent Street, before the Queen and the Royal Family, by the Queen's own command. After this special performance other representations of the work were given—first at the Gallery of Illustration, subsequently (with professional actresses) in some of the principal towns in England—for the benefit of the family of a well-beloved friend of ours, who died in 1857—the late Douglas Jerrold. At Manchester the play was twice performed—on the second evening in the presence of three thousand spectators. This was, I think, the finest of all the representations of 'The Frozen Deep.' The extraordinary intelligence and enthusiasm of the

great audience stimulated us all to do our best. Dickens surpassed himself. The trite phrase is the true phrase to describe that magnificent piece of acting. He literally electrified the audience.

In Remembrance of the late Mr. Douglas Jerrold

FREE TRADE HALL

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. CHARLES DICKENS

On FRIDAY Evening, Aug. 21, and on SATURDAY Evening, Aug. 22, 1857,

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK EXACTLY

Will be presented an entirely new Romantic Drama, in Three Acts, by

MR. WILKIE COLLINS

CALLED

THE FROZEN DEEP

The Overture composed expressly for this Piece by Mr. FRANCESCO BERGER, who will conduct the ORCHESTRA

The Dresses by MESSRS. NATHAN, *of Titchbourne Street, Haymarket, and* MISS WILKINS, *of Carburton Street, Fitzroy Square. Perruquier,* MR. WILSON, *of the Strand.*

Captain Ebsworth (*of the 'Sea-Mew'*)	Mr. Edward Pigott
Captain Helding (*of the 'Wanderer'*)	Mr. Alfred Dickens
Lieutenant Crayford	Mr. Mark Lemon
Frank Aldersley	Mr. Wilkie Collins
Richard Wardour	Mr. Charles Dickens
Lieutenant Steventon	Mr. Young Charles [1]
John Want (*Ship's Cook*)	Mr. Augustus Egg
Bateson, Darker (*two of the 'Sea-Mew's' people*)	Mr. Shirley Brooks, Mr. Charles Collins

(OFFICERS AND CREWS OF THE 'SEA-MEW' AND 'WANDERER.')

Mrs. Steventon	Mrs. George Vining
Rose Ebsworth	Miss Ellen Sabine
Lucy Crayford	Miss Ellen Ternan
Clara Burnham	Miss Maria Ternan
Nurse Esther	Mrs. Ternan
Maid	Miss Mewte [2]

The Scenery and Scenic Effects of the First Act by Mr. Telbin.

The Scenery and Scenic Effects of the Second and Third Acts by Mr. Stanfield, R.A.

[1] A facetious nickname, invented by Dickens for his eldest son.

[2] Another nickname by Dickens for a young lady who had nothing to say.

"I present here, as 'a curiosity' which may be welcome to some of my readers, a portion of the original playbill of the performance at Manchester. To me it has now become one of the saddest memorials of the past that I possess. Of the nine amateur actors who played the men's parts (one of them my brother, all of them my valued friends) but two are now living besides myself—Mr Charles Dickens, junr., and Mr Edward Pigott.

"The country performances being concluded, nearly ten years passed before the footlights shone again on 'The Frozen Deep.' In 1866 I accepted a proposal, made to me by Mr Horace Wigan, to produce the play (with certain alterations and additions) on the public stage, at the Olympic Theatre, London. The first performance took place (while I was myself absent from England) on the 27th of November, in the year just mentioned. Mr H. Neville acted the part 'created' by Dickens.

"Seven years passed after the production of the play at the Olympic Theatre, and then 'The Frozen Deep' appealed once more to public favour, in another country than England, and under a totally new form.

"I occupied the autumn and winter of 1873-74 most agreeably to myself, by a tour in the United States of America, receiving from the generous people of that great country a welcome which I shall remember proudly and gratefully to the end of my life. During my stay in America I read in public, in the principal cities, one of my shorter stories (enlarged and rewritten for the purpose), called 'The Dream-Woman.' Concluding my tour at Boston, I was advised by my friends to give, if possible, a special attraction to my farewell reading in America, by presenting to my audience a new work. Having this object in view, and having but a short space

of time at my disposal, I bethought myself of 'The Frozen Deep.' The play had never been published, and I determined to rewrite it in narrative form for a public reading. The experiment proved, on trial, to be far more successful than I had ventured to anticipate. Occupying nearly two hours in its delivery, the transformed 'Frozen Deep' kept its hold from first to last on the interest and sympathies of the audience."

"I think the last time I went to the Tavistock House theatricals," writes Mrs Keeley, "was at the coming of age of the eldest son, Charley. I sat in a nice place, and in front of me was Macready, with Lord Lyndhurst resting against the tragedian's legs. Edwin Landseer was also present among the audience, together with George Cruikshank, Augustus Egg, Stanfield (who painted the scenery), and, I think, John Forster. I recollect that Dickens 'gagged' a good deal, as usual, in a piece called 'Uncle John,' and that Mac, who disapproved of such things, kept growling out, *sotto voce*, 'Oh, you shouldn't gag!'"

Tavistock House was relinquished in September, 1860, thenceforward Gad's Hill being Dickens's home.

XXXI

ON THE CONTINENT—1853-6

IN the summer of 1853 Dickens was at Boulogne, to which place we shall return later on, and in October started thence with Wilkie Collins and Augustus Egg for a run through Switzerland and Italy. The expedition nearly came to an untimely end upon the Mer de Glace—"we were . . . going along an immense height like a chimney-piece, with sheer precipice below, when there came rolling from above, with fearful velocity, a block of stone about the size of one of the fountains in Trafalgar Square, which Egg, the last of the party, had preceded by not a yard, when it swept over the ledge, breaking away a tree, and rolled and tumbled down into the valley."

In the "Letters" there is a delightful account of this trip, from which we will take a few extracts to prove the quality of the remainder. To Miss Hogarth he writes from Milan on October 25: "On the Swiss side of the Simplon, we slept at the beastliest little town, in the wildest kind of house, where some fifty cats tumbled into the corridor outside our bedrooms all at once in the middle of the night—whether through the roof or not, I don't know, for it was dark when we got up—and made such a horrible and terrific noise that we started out of our beds in a panic. . . . We continue to get on very well together. We really do admirably. I lose no opportunity

of inculcating the lesson that it is of no use to be out of temper in travelling, and it is very seldom wanted for any of us. Egg is an excellent fellow, and full of good qualities ; I am sure a generous and staunch man at heart, and a good and honourable nature."

From Genoa to Naples the voyage was more exciting than pleasant, though it was rendered less disagreeable by meeting with his old friends the Emerson Tennents—Sir James, the first baronet, a famous traveller and a not unknown politician.

George Dolby tells a quaint little story of Dickens at the funeral of this old friend :—" ' Of course I made an ass of myself,' Dickens said, ' and did the wrong thing, as I *invariably* do at a funeral.' He proceeded to explain that, arriving at the house of his late friend, he was met in the hall by an elderly gentleman, who extended his hand. Presuming this to be a friend of Sir James's, whom he had met somewhere but had forgotten, he shook the gentleman by the hand, saying at the same time—

" ' We meet on a sad occasion.'

" ' Yes, indeed,' was the reply, ' Poor dear Sir James.'

" (This with a long-drawn sigh.)

" Dickens passed on to the dining-room where several other friends were congregated, and where for a time he quite forgot his friend in the hall ; but presently he was reminded of that affecting meeting by the entrance of the elderly gentleman carrying before him a trayful of hats adorned with long mourning bands, and so high was the pile as to almost hide him from view.

" The elderly gentleman's position in society was now made manifest. He was the undertaker's man, and wanted Dickens's hat for the purpose of funereal decoration ; hence his object in holding out his hand."

As we have said the voyage to Naples was excessively uncomfortable, which is not to be marvelled at, as the ship was overcrowded abominably, and there was no sleeping accommodation of any kind: "the scene on board beggars description. Ladies on the tables, gentlemen under the tables, and ladies and gentlemen lying indiscriminately on the open deck, arrayed like spoons on a sideboard. . . . We were all gradually dozing off when a perfectly tropical rain fell, and in a moment drowned the whole ship. . . . Emerson Tennent, with the greatest kindness, turned his son out of his state room (who, indeed, volunteered to go in the most amiable manner), and I got a good bed there. The store-room down by the hold was opened for Egg and Collins, and they slept with the moist sugar, the cheese in cut, the spices, the cruets, the apples and pears—in a perfect chandler's shop; in company with what the ——'s would call a 'hold gent.' . . . a cat, and the steward—who dozed in an armchair, and all night long fell headforemost, once in every five minutes, on Egg, who slept on the counter or dresser."

Winding up our brief account, we quote an amusing description of a visit to the opera at Rome:—"All the seats are numbered arm-chairs, and you buy your number at the pay-place, and go to it with the easiest direction on the ticket itself. We were early, and the four places of the Americans were on the next row behind us—all together. After looking about them for some time, and seeing the greater part of the seats empty (because the audience generally wait in a caffé which is part of the theatre), one of them said 'Waal I dunno—I expect we aint no call to set so nigh to one another neither—will you scatter Kernel, will you scatter sir?'—Upon this

the Kernel 'scattered' some twenty benches off; and they distributed themselves (for no earthly reason apparently but to get rid of one another) all over the pit. As soon as the overture began, in came the audience in a mass. Then the people who had got the numbers into which they had 'scattered' had to get them out; and as they understood nothing that was said to them, and could make no reply but 'A—mericani,' you may imagine the number of cocked hats it took to dislodge them. At last they were all got back into their right places, except one. About an hour afterwards when Moses (*Moses in Egypt* was the opera) was invoking the darkness, and there was a dead silence all over the house, unwonted sounds of disturbance broke out from a distant corner of the pit, and here and there a head got up to look. 'What is it neow, sir?' said one of the Americans to another; 'some person seems to be getting along, again streem.' 'Waal sir,' he replied, 'I dunno. But I 'xpect 'tis the Kernel sir, a holdin on.' So it was. The Kernel was ignominiously escorted back to his right place, not in the least disconcerted, and in perfectly good spirits and temper."

Broadstairs was "Our English Boulogne," "Our French Watering Place," in which latter place Dickens resided from June to September, 1853, from June until October, 1854, and from June until September, 1856.

Boulogne is one of the most misunderstood places in the world, at least by those who have not resided there for some little time. It is looked upon as almost the French equivalent of our English Margate, whereas in reality it is a most interesting and in many ways most picturesque town. We need not enter into its ancient history, but would rather recall that it has for long years

been one of the gates of France through which has ebbed and flowed a constant stream of wayfarers from and to our coasts. In May, 1822, the *Rob Roy*, the first of the Boulogne steam packets, brought over six passengers, since then the traffic has grown to its present enormous extent. But the days that most appeal to us are those before the so-called abolition of imprisonment for debt, when many a poor exile from England haunted its hilly and not seldom smelly streets. There was a club at which they used to play whist at franc points—no credit given! They were on the whole a fairly cheerful crew, certainly so considering that most of them had seen better days, and not a few lie sleeping in the cemetery upon the hill, up beyond the old walls of the old town, from which it is possible almost to see the distant white cliffs of "home." A visit to this cemetery, beside the St Omer Road, brings home to the English eye how sad a part his countrymen have played in the history of the town, dying there on alien soil. Of the more famous names we may mention Sir Nicolas Harris Nicolas, the antiquarian, who began life in the navy in the stirring days at the opening of last century; Basil Montagu, friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and editor of Bacon; Katherine, Lady Dundonald, widow of the tenth earl, the fiery sailor; Smithson Tennant, the Cambridge chemist; Sir William Ouseley, the Orientalist. No fewer than eighty-two bodies from the female convict ship, the *Amphitrite*, which was wrecked off Boulogne in 1833, all hands being lost, are interred here; as also Thomas Green, the captain, and many of the officers, passengers, and crew of the *Reliance*, wrecked in 1812, seven souls only out of 116 being saved. But it is the tombstones, many of them of the humblest description, bearing unknown names

that are the saddest; here lie many exiles, who died heartbroken, hopeless, and poor.

The old town of Boulogne is as picturesque a walled city as we need desire to see, and from it a brief walk takes us out into the countryside.

In 1853, Dickens rented a house high up, near the Calais Road ," a doll's country-house of many rooms, in a delightful garden," he calls it in a letter to Wilkie Collins. He writes to Forster, " If this were but 300 miles farther off how the English would rave about it! I do assure you that there are picturesque people, and town, and country, about this place, that quite fill up the eye and fancy." And, " this house is on a great hill-side, backed up by woods of young trees. It faces the Haute Ville with the ramparts and the unfinished cathedral. . . . On the slope in front, going steep down to the right, all Boulogne is piled and jumbled about in a very picturesque manner." Dickens quite fell in love with his landlord, M. Beaucourt, whom in " Our French Watering-Place " he describes as M. Loyal Devasseur :—

" We can never henceforth separate our French watering-place from our own landlord of two summers, M. Loyal Devasseur, citizen and town-councillor. Permit us to have the pleasure of presenting M. Loyal Devasseur.

" His own family name is simply Loyal; but, as he is married, and as in that part of France a husband always adds to his own name the family name of his wife, he writes himself Loyal Devasseur. He owns a compact little estate of some twenty or thirty acres on a lofty hillside, and on it he has built two country-houses, which he lets furnished. They are by many degrees the best houses that are so let near our French watering-place; we have had the honour of living in both, and can testify.

"The entrance-hall of the first we inhabited was ornamented with a plan of the estate, representing it as about twice the size of Ireland; insomuch that when we were yet new to the property (M. Loyal always speaks of it as 'La propriété') we went three miles straight on end in search of the Bridge of Austerlitz—which we afterwards found to be immediately outside the window. The Château of the Old Guard, in another part of the grounds, and, according to the plan, about two leagues from the little dining-room, we sought in vain for a week, until, happening one evening to sit upon a bench in the forest (forest in the plan), a few yards from the house door, we observed at our feet, in the ignominious circumstances of being upside down and greenly rotten, the Old Guard himself, that is to say, the painted effigy of a member of that distinguished corps, seven feet high, and in the act of carrying arms, who had had the misfortune to be blown down in the previous winter. It will be perceived that M. Loyal is a staunch admirer of the great Napoleon. He is an old soldier himself—captain of the National Guard, with a handsome gold vase on his chimney-piece, presented to him by his company—and his respect for the memory of the illustrious general is enthusiastic. Medallions of him, portraits of him, busts of him, pictures of him, are thickly sprinkled all over the property. During the first month of our occupation, it was our affliction to be constantly knocking down Napoleon: if we touched a shelf in a dark corner, he toppled over with a crash; and every door we opened, shook him to the soul. Yet M. Loyal is not a man of mere castles in the air, or, as he would say, in Spain. He has a specially practical, contriving, clever, skilful eye and hand. His houses are

delightful. He unites French elegance and English comfort, in a happy manner quite his own. He has an extraordinary genius for making tasteful little bedrooms in angles of his roofs, which an Englishman would as soon think of turning to any account as he would think of cultivating the desert. We have ourself reposed deliciously in an elegant chamber of M. Loyal's construction, with our head as nearly in the kitchen chimney-pot as we can conceive it likely for the head of any gentleman, not by profession a sweep, to be. And, into whatsoever strange nook M. Loyal's genius penetrates, it, in that nook, infallibly constructs a cupboard and a row of pegs. In either of our houses, we could have put away the knapsacks and hung up the hats of the whole regiment of Guides.

"Aforetime, M. Loyal was a tradesman in the town. You can transact business with no present tradesman in the town, and give your card 'chez M. Loyal,' but a brighter face shines upon you directly. We doubt if there is, ever was, or ever will be, a man so universally pleasant in the minds of people as M. Loyal is in the minds of the citizens of our French watering-place. They rub their hands and laugh when they speak of him. Ah, but he is such a good child, such a brave boy, such a generous spirit, that Monsieur Loyal! It is the honest truth. M. Loyal's nature is the nature of a gentleman. He cultivates his ground with his own hands (assisted by one little labourer, who falls into a fit now and then); and he digs and delves from morn till eve in prodigious perspirations—'works always,' as he says—but, cover him with dust, mud, weeds, water, any stains you will, you never can cover the gentleman in M. Loyal. A portly, upright, broad-shouldered, brown-faced man,

whose soldierly bearing gives him the appearance of being taller than he is; look into the bright eye of M. Loyal, standing before you in his working blouse and cap, not particularly well shaved, and, it may be, very earthy, and you shall discern in M. Loyal a gentleman whose true politeness is ingrain, and confirmation of whose word by his bond you would blush to think of. Not without reason is M. Loyal when he tells that story, in his own vivacious way, of his travelling to Fulham, near London, to buy all these hundreds and hundreds of trees you now see upon the property, then a bare, bleak hill; and of his sojourning in Fulham three months; and of his jovial evenings with the market-gardeners; and of the crowning banquet before his departure, when the market-gardeners rose as one man, clinked their glasses all together (as the custom at Fulham is), and cried, 'Vive Loyal!'

"M. Loyal has an agreeable wife, but no family; and he loves to drill the children of his tenants, or run races with them, or do anything with them, or for them, that is good-natured. He is of a highly convivial temperament, and his hospitality is unbounded. Billet a soldier on him, and he is delighted. Five-and-thirty soldiers had M. Loyal billeted on him this present summer, and they all got fat and red-faced in two days. It became a legend among the troops that whosoever got billeted on M. Loyal rolled in clover; and so it fell out that the fortunate man who drew the billet 'M. Loyal Devasseur' always leaped into the air, though in heavy marching order. M. Loyal cannot bear to admit anything that might seem by any implication to disparage the military profession. We hinted to him once, that we were conscious of a remote doubt arising in our mind, whether a sou a day for pocket-money, tobacco, stockings,

drink, washing, and social pleasures in general, left a very large margin for a soldier's enjoyment. Pardon! said Monsieur Loyal, rather wincing. It was not a fortune, but—à la bonne heure—it was better than it used to be! What, we asked him on another occasion, were all those neighbouring peasants, each living with his family in one room, and each having a soldier (perhaps two) billeted on him every other night, required to provide for those soldiers? 'Faith!' said M. Loyal reluctantly; 'a bed, monsieur, and fire to cook with, and a candle. And they share their supper with those soldiers. It is not possible that they could eat alone.'—'And what allowance do they get for this?' said we. Monsieur Loyal drew himself up taller, took a step back, laid his hand upon his breast, and said, with majesty, as speaking for himself and all France, 'Monsieur, it is a contribution to the State!'

"It is never going to rain, according to M. Loyal. When it is impossible to deny that it is now raining in torrents, he says it will be fine—charming—magnificent—to-morrow. It is never hot on the property, he contends. Likewise it is never cold. The flowers, he says, come out, delighting to grow there; it is like Paradise this morning; it is like the Garden of Eden. He is a little fanciful in his language: smilingly observing of Madame Loyal, when she is absent at vespers, that she is 'gone to her salvation'—allée à son salut. He has a great enjoyment of tobacco, but nothing would induce him to continue smoking face to face with a lady. His short black pipe immediately goes into his breast pocket, scorches his blouse, and nearly sets him on fire. In the town council and on occasions of ceremony, he appears in a full suit of black, with a waistcoat of magnificent breadth across the chest, and a shirt-collar of fabulous proportions. Good M.

Loyal! Under blouse or waistcoat, he carries one of the gentlest hearts that beats in a nation teeming with gentle people. He has had losses, and has been at his best under them. Not only the loss of his way by night in the Fulham times—when a bad subject of an Englishman, under pretence of seeing him home, took him into all the night public-houses, drank 'arfanarf' in every one at his expense, and finally fled, leaving him shipwrecked at Cleefeeway, which we apprehend to be Ratcliffe Highway—but heavier losses than that. Long ago, a family of children and a mother were left in one of his houses without money, a whole year. M. Loyal—anything but as rich as we wish he had been—had not the heart to say 'you must go'; so they stayed on and stayed on, and paying-tenants who would have come in couldn't come in, and at last they managed to get helped home across the water; and M. Loyal kissed the whole group, and said, 'Adieu, my poor infants!' and sat down in their deserted salon and smoked his pipe of peace.—'The rent, M. Loyal?' 'Eh! well! The rent!' M. Loyal shakes his head. 'Le bon Dieu,' says M. Loyal presently, 'will recompense me,' and he laughs and smokes his pipe of peace. May he smoke it on the property, and not be recompensed, these fifty years!"

We feel assured that we shall be granted forgiveness for this lengthy quotation, not only because the picture is so delightful in itself, but because it shows us one of Dickens's humbler friends. We add to it this view of the old town:—

"We have an old walled town, rich in cool public wells of water, on the top of a hill within and above the present business-town; and if it were some hundreds of miles farther from England, instead of being, on a clear day, within sight of the grass growing in the crevices

of the chalk-cliffs of Dover, you would long ago have been bored to death about that town. It is more picturesque and quaint than half the innocent places which tourists, following their leader like sheep, have made impostors of. To say nothing of its houses with grave courtyards, its queer by-corners, and its many-windowed streets white and quiet in the sunlight, there is an ancient belfry in it that would have been in all the annuals and albums, going and gone, these hundred years, if it had but been more expensive to get at. Happily it has escaped so well, being only in our French watering-place, that you may like it of your own accord in a natural manner, without being required to go into convulsions about it. We regard it as one of the later blessings of our life, that BILKINS, the only authority on taste, never took any notice that we can find out, of our French watering-place. Bilkins never wrote about it, never pointed out anything to be seen in it, never measured anything in it, always left it alone. For which relief, Heaven bless the town and the memory of the immortal Bilkins likewise!

" There is a charming walk, arched and shaded by trees, on the old walls that form the four sides of this high town, whence you get glimpses of the streets below, and changing views of the other town and of the river, and of the hills and of the sea. It is made more agreeable and peculiar by some of the solemn houses that are rooted in the deep streets below, bursting into a fresher existence atop, and having doors and windows, and even gardens, on these ramparts. A child going in at the courtyard gate of one of these houses, climbing up the many stairs, and coming out at the fourth-floor window, might conceive himself another Jack, alighting on enchanted ground from another bean-stalk. It is a place wonderfully

populous in children ; English children, with governesses reading novels as they walk down the shady lanes of trees, or nursemaids interchanging gossip on the seats ; French children with their smiling bonnes in snow-white caps, and themselves—if little boys—in straw head-gear like beehives, work-baskets and church hassocks. Three years ago, there were three weazen old men, one bearing a frayed red ribbon in his threadbare button-hole, always to be found walking together among these children, before dinner-time. If they walked for an appetite, they doubtless lived *en pension*—were contracted for—otherwise their poverty would have made it a rash action. They were stooping, blear-eyed, dull old men, slip-shod and shabby, in long-skirted, short-waisted coats and meagre trousers, and yet with a ghost of gentility hovering in their company. They spoke little to each other, and looked as if they might have been politically discontented if they had had vitality enough. Once, we overheard red-ribbon feebly complain to the other two that somebody, or something, was 'a robber' ; and then they all three set their mouths so that they would have ground their teeth if they had had any. The ensuing winter gathered red-ribbon unto the great company of faded ribbons, and next year the remaining two were there—getting themselves entangled with hoops and dolls—familiar mysteries to the children—probably in the eyes of most of them, harmless creatures who had never been like children, and whom children could never be like. Another winter came, and another old man went, and so, this present year, the last of the triumvirate left off walking—it was no good, now—and sat by himself on a little solitary bench, with the hoops and the dolls as lively as ever about him."

There is scarce anything in Goldsmith or Lamb that is more charming.

Here, as everywhere else that he went, Dickens gathered his friends around him, among his visitors being Wilkie Collins, the Leechs, the Wards, and the Frank Stones. We find him writing to Peter Cunningham, "If you ever have a holiday that you don't know what to do with, *do* come and pass a little time here. We live in a charming garden in a very charming country, and should be delighted to receive you. Excellent light wines on the premises, French cookery, millions of roses, two cows (for milk punch), vegetables cut for the pot, and handed in at the kitchen window; five summer-houses, fifteen fountains (with no water in 'em), and thirty-seven clocks (keeping, as I conceive, Australian time; having no reference whatever to the hours on this side of the globe)."

In 1854 M. Beaucourt was again Dickens's landlord, the house this time being the Villa du Camp de Droite, on the summit of the hill, not far from the Napoleon Column, of which the foundation-stone was laid by Soult in 1804, and which commemorates the encampment of the army that was to conquer perfidious Albion, whose white shores can be seen gleaming across the channel. "We have a most charming place here," he writes to W. H. Wills, "it beats the former residence all to nothing. We have a beautiful garden, with all its fruits and flowers, and a field of our own, and a road of our own away to the Column, and everything that is airy and fresh. . . . If the weather ever should be fine, it might do you good sometimes to come over with the proofs [1] on a Saturday, when the tide serves well, before

[1] Of *Household Words*.

you and Mrs W. make your annual visit. Recollect there is always a bed, and no sudden appearance will put us out."

The visit of the Prince Consort and Napoleon III to the great Northern Camp was *the* event of this year; "The day came at last, and all Boulogne turned out for its holiday," says Forster, then proceeds to quote a letter of Dickens's:—"but I had by this cooled down a little, and, reserving myself for the illuminations, I . . . set off upon my usual country walk. See my reward. Coming home by the Calais road, covered with dust, I suddenly find myself face to face with Albert and Napoleon, jogging along in the pleasantest way, a little in front, talking extremely loud about the view, and attended by a brilliant staff of some sixty or seventy horsemen, with a couple of our royal grooms with their red coats riding oddly enough in the midst of the magnates. I took off my wide-awake without stopping to stare; whereupon the Emperor pulled off his cocked hat; and Albert (seeing, I suppose, that it was an Englishman) pulled off his. Then we went our several ways. The Emperor is broader across the chest than in the old times when we used to see him so often at Gore House, and stoops more in the shoulders."

The Leechs were among the visitors this year. After an exceeding stormy crossing, poor Leech, who had suffered severely, was uproariously greeted by the hard-hearted throng of idlers who always watch the arrivals by boat, whereupon he explained to Dickens that he now understood what an actor's feelings must be when his efforts are rewarded with applause; "I felt," he said, "that I had made a great hit."

In 1856 Dickens was back again at the Villa des

Moulineaux, and among those who went over to see him were Douglas Jerrold and Wilkie Collins, who for many weeks lived in a little cottage in the garden of the villa.

Dickens avoided, as far as possible, his fellow-countrymen on tour, and of some of them he had hard words to say. After a visit to the pier, he writes, " The said pier at evening is a phase of the place we never see, and which I hardly know. But I never did behold such specimens of the youth of my country, male and female, as pervade that place. They are really, in their vulgarity and insolence, quite disheartening. One is so fearfully ashamed of them, and they contrast so unfavourably with the natives."

Great sorrow was caused by the death here of his friend, Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, one of the original " Punch " staff, a metropolitan police magistrate, and the author of numerous comic works and plays. Mr M. H. Spielmann, in his " History of Punch," relates how when mere lads, à Beckett and his chum, Henry Mayhew, started a satirical paper *The Cerberus*, with a capital of three pounds! To " Punch " he was a facile contributor. " I recollect well," writes the Hon. T. T. à Beckett, in his " Reminiscences," " my brother—who wrote for it from the first number to the last that appeared in his life-time—bringing me away from my office on an assurance that if I accompanied him as far as the Strand, he would show me something that would fill me at once with gratification and amazement. He kept me in suspense until I reached Catherine Street, when he stopped short and said, ' Now you shall see me draw a pound from *Punch*, and if that don't amaze and gratify you, you must have but a poor sense of the marvellous and very little brotherly sympathy.' "

Of his nimble wit Mr Spielmann gives a pretty example,

" when the election of Louis Napoleon appeared likely, the policy of *Punch* in respect to it was anxiously discussed at the Table. One of the Staff—Thackeray most likely —declared that it would be wise to be indefinite. ' Nonsense,' said à Beckett, ' if you're not definite, you'd better be dumb in it ! ' "

An epidemic had broken out in Boulogne, and among many children attacked by it was à Beckett's favourite son ; the father hastened from Paris, and himself died only two days after his boy.

Turning to happier matters ; Albert and Arthur Smith were two jolly fishermen, and used to go a-fishing in the harbour. Dr Elliotson was also among the visitors to Boulogne, and Ballantine gives a comic description of a " crossing." Upon one occasion the doctor, Charles Dickens, and Ballantine " started together in the packet from Boulogne, for Folkestone. Neither of my comrades was a good sailor, and they knew it themselves. The illustrious author armed himself with a box of homœopathic globules ; and the doctor, whose figure was rotund, having a theory that by tightening the stomach the internal movements which caused the sickness might be prevented, waddled down to the boat with his body almost divided by a strap. The weather was stormy, and neither remedy proved of any avail."

We will say " farewell " to " Our French Watering-Place " with one more quotation :—

" The English form a considerable part of the population of our French watering-place, and are deservedly addressed and respected in many ways. Some of the surface-addresses to them are odd enough, as when a laundress puts a placard outside her house announcing her possession of that curious British instrument, a

'Mingle'; or when a tavern-keeper provides accommodation for the celebrated English game of 'Nokemdon.' But, to us, it is not the least pleasant feature of our French watering-place that a long and constant fusion of the two great nations there, has taught each to like the other, and to learn from the other, and to rise superior to the absurd prejudices that have lingered among the weak and ignorant in both countries equally.

"Drumming and trumpeting, of course, go on for ever in our French watering-place. Flag-flying is at a premium, too; but we cheerfully avow that we consider a flag a very pretty object, and that we take such outward signs of innocent liveliness to our heart of hearts. The people in the town and in the country are a busy people who work hard; they are sober, temperate, good-humoured, light-hearted, and generally remarkable for their engaging manners. Few just men, not moderately bilious, could see them in their recreations without very much respecting the character that is so easily, so harmlessly, and so simply pleased."

In October, 1855, after an autumn spent at Folkestone, Dickens spent the winter in Paris, taking an *appartement* at 49 Avenue de Champs Elysées, where he remained until the following May. Wilkie Collins lodged hard by, the Reverend James White and his family also stayed for the winter, and among the visitors was the ever welcome Macready.

Dickens had a "most awful job to find a place that would in the least suit" him and his family, but at last settled at the address above given, where, he writes to Wills, "I have two floors . . . *entresol* and first—in a doll's house, but really pretty within, and the view without astounding."

He seems to have devoted considerable time to the theatre ; renewed his friendship with M. Regnier of the Français, and writes to Forster a brilliant account of Frédéric Lemaitre's acting.

There on January 19, 1856, we have him writing to Wilkie Collins, noting that he is "sitting" to Ary Scheffer, and that he has met Georges Sand at Madame Viardot's, noting of her —" the human mind cannot conceive any one more astonishingly opposed to all my preconceptions. If I had been shown her in a state of repose, and asked what I thought her to be, I should have said : ' The Queen's monthly nurse.' *Au reste,* she has nothing of the *bas bleu* about her, and is very quiet and agreeable." Ary Scheffer he describes as a " frank and noble fellow," but with regard to the portrait he writes sadly to Forster, " The nightmare portrait is nearly done. . . . It is a fine spirited head, painted at his very best. . . . But it does not look to me at all like, nor does it strike me that if I saw it in a gallery I should suppose myself to be the original. It is always possible that I don't know my own face."

Forster gives brief notes of some pleasant dinner parties ; at Scribe's, to meet Auber, " a stolid little elderly man, rather petulant in manner " ; at M. Pichot's, where was Lamartine, " frank and unaffected," and " Scribe and his wife were of the party, but had to go away at the ice-time," to be at the opening performance of Scribe and Auber's opera " Manon Lescaut " ; Mdme. Scribe— " the most extraordinary woman I ever beheld ; for her eldest son must be thirty, and she has the figure of five and twenty, and is strikingly handsome. So graceful, too, that her manner of rising, curtseying, laughing, and going out after him, was pleasanter than the pleasantest thing I have ever seen done on the stage."

XXXII

MRS CHARLES DICKENS

BEFORE entering upon the one unpleasant task which the writing of this book compels us to perform, namely, the account of the separation between Charles Dickens and his wife, it will be well to gain a more close acquaintance with the latter than we have yet done. The pages of Forster contain but very fleeting and scanty glimpses of her. She was the eldest daughter of George Hogarth, Dickens's fellow-worker on the *Morning Chronicle*, and was married on April 2, 1836. The honeymoon was spent at the little village of Chalk, on the road between Rochester and Gravesend. E. Laman Blanchard tells us that he used frequently to meet Dickens walking on this road, usually near Chalk, at a point where a pretty lane branched off in the direction of Shorne and Cobham, "here the brisk walk of Charles Dickens was always slackened, and he never failed to glance meditatively for a few moments at the windows of a corner house on the southern side of the road, advantageously situated for commanding views of the river and the far-stretching landscape beyond. It was in that house he lived immediately after his marriage." Soon after the birth of their first son they stayed there again. In the early years, at any rate, of their married life, Dickens used to take his wife into his confidence as to the progress of the work in hand, for when writing

"Nicholas Nickleby" he says in a letter to Forster, "Nancy is no more. I showed what I have done to Kate last night, who was in an unspeakable '*state*': from which and my own impression I augur well."

We have already noted many trips and tours upon which Mrs Dickens accompanied her husband, not always, however, starting in very high spirits, as to America, when Dickens says in referring to his anxiety to go there, "Kate cries dismally if I mention the subject," not altogether an unnatural thing for a mother to do; later on he writes, "Kate is quite reconciled. Anne" (her maid) "goes, and is amazingly cheerful and light of heart upon it." Of which Anne Dickens wrote at a very different time as, "an attached woman servant (more friend to both of us than a servant), who lived with us sixteen years, and is now married, and who was, and still is, in Mrs Dickens's confidence and in mine. . . ."

Here are two accounts of Mrs Dickens's personal appearance at this period:—

"I was first introduced to his wife," writes E. E. C. "in the sanctuary of the bedroom, where I was arranging my hair before the glass. I thought her a pretty little woman, with the heavy-lidded large blue eyes so much admired by men. The nose was a little *retroussé*, the forehead good, the mouth small, round, and red-lipped, with a pleasant smiling expression, notwithstanding the sleepy look of the slow-moving eyes. The weakest part of her face was the chin, which melted too suddenly into the throat."

Of her, during the visit to America in 1842, here is a description, "Mrs Dickens is a large woman, having a great deal of color, and is rather coarse; but she has a good face and looks amiable. She seemed to think that

Mr Dickens was the attraction, and was perfectly satisfied to play second, happy in the knowledge that she was his wife. She wore a pink silk dress, trimmed with a white blond flounce, and a pink cord and tassel wound about her head. She spoke but little, yet smiled pleasantly at all that was said."

Chief Justice Ellis Lewis, of Philadelphia, writes, "I was much pleased with the social and genial disposition of Mr Dickens, and was impressed with the great difference which appeared to exist, at that early time, in their lives, between the husband and wife. She was good looking, plain and courteous in her manners, but rather taciturn, leaving the burthen of the conversation to fall upon her gifted husband." What else could the poor lady be expected to do?

Dickens writes on April 24, 1842, of their arrival at Cincinnati, where they landed at night, "as we made our way on foot over the broken pavement, Anne measured her length upon the ground, but didn't hurt herself. I say nothing of Kate's troubles—but you recollect her propensity? She falls into, or out of, every coach or boat we enter; scrapes the skin off her legs; brings great sores and swellings on her feet; chips large fragments out of her ankle-bones; and makes herself blue with bruises. She really has, however, since we got over the first trial of being among circumstances so new and so fatiguing, made a *most admirable* traveller in every respect. She has never screamed or expressed alarm under circumstances that would have fully justified her doing so, even in my eyes; has never given way to despondency or fatigue, though we have now been travelling incessantly, through a very rough country, for more than a month, and have been at times, as you may readily suppose, most

thoroughly tired; has always accommodated herself, well and cheerfully, to everything; and has pleased me very much, and proved herself perfectly game." The "even in my eyes," and "has pleased me very much" smack somewhat of the sultanesque.

An American visitor, Miss Clarke, described Mrs Dickens in 1852 as "a plump, rosy, English, handsome woman, with a certain air of absent-mindedness, yet gentle and kindly."

On Continental tours and sojournings we catch faint glimpses of her now and again in Forster's pages; we read, too, of her ill-health more than once and of visits to Malvern and elsewhere for its betterment, but she is permitted—rightly or wrongly, who knows?—by the biographer to make but little figure until we reach the chapter headed somewhat melodramatically, "What Happened At This Time." Before studying this sad chapter, we will give some further portraits of Mrs Dickens.

An old friend of hers has told us that she must have been extremely pretty as a girl; a sweet-natured, easy-going, amiable woman; without, perhaps, any very strong character. A thorough-going admirer of her husband, whom she loved very sincerely. Once at Boulogne, our informant was driving with Mrs Dickens, who told of her husband's intense fondness for babies, and how he liked them as "new" as possible. Then we have Hans Andersen writing, "I had previously heard many people remark that Agnes in 'David Copperfield' was like Dickens's own wife; and although he may not have chosen her deliberately as a model for Agnes, yet still I can think of no one else in his books so near akin to her in all that is graceful and amiable. Mrs Dickens had a certain soft, womanly repose and reserve about

her; but whenever she spoke there came such a light into her large eyes, and such a smile upon her lips, and there was such a charm in the tones of her voice, that henceforth I shall always connect her and Agnes together."

In 1853 Mrs Beecher Stowe describes Mrs Dickens as "a good specimen of a truly English woman; tall, large, and well developed, with fine, healthy colour, and an air of frankness, cheerfulness, and reliability. A friend whispered to me that she was as observing and fond of humour as her husband."

Another has told us that she was a typical, crinoliny early-Victorian woman, a John Leech woman, which conveys much to those familiar with the earlier volumes of "Punch." She was a domestic wife in the days when wives were expected to be so, and, as was also expected, made little figure in her husband's public life. She was a sweet, kind, charming woman. "She was a kind, good woman," we are told by one who heartily sympathised with her, "good in every sense of the word, and when she left her husband's house, she left her heart behind her."

Lady Ritchie writes of a children's party at the Dickens's, "One special party I remember, which seemed to me to go on for years with its kind, gay hospitality, its music, its streams of children passing and re-passing. We were a little shy coming in alone in all the consciousness of new shoes and ribbons, but Mrs Dickens called us to sit beside her till the long sweeping dance was over, and talked to us as if we were grown up, which is always flattering to little children."

As Dickens himself insisted on making public some details, at any rate, of the causes that led to his separating from Mrs Dickens, we are not trespassing on a matter

which he considered did not concern the public ; moreover, the method of his dealing with it casts a considerable light upon his character. He has told *his* story with not a little fullness ; it must be borne in mind that Mrs Dickens chose the more dignified part—silence.

Forster was a man who weighed well his written words, and there are many pregnant sentences in the chapter to which we have alluded, and this tale had best be told, for the most part, in his words, and those of Dickens, taken from that same chapter, and from a letter written by Dickens to Arthur Smith, " as an authority for correction of false rumours and scandals." This letter was published in the *New York Tribune* of August 16, 1858, and Dickens always called it his " violated letter " ; but, having been written as an " authority," we do not see that we can do better than quote portions of it.

Forster begins his chapter by noting that a change had gradually been coming over Dickens, and that " the satisfactions which home should have supplied, and which indeed were essential requirements of his nature, he had failed to find in his home." His nervous system had undoubtedly become strained ; " too late to say, put the curb on," he writes, " and don't rush at hills—the wrong man to say it to. I have now no relief but in action. I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break, and die, if I spared myself. Much better to die, doing. What I am in that way, nature made me first, and my way of life has of late, alas ! confirmed. I must accept the drawback—since it is one—with the powers I have ; and I must hold upon the tenure prescribed to me." Then later, " Why is it, that as with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have

missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made ? "

Edmund Yates tells us, " it had been obvious to those visiting at Tavistock House that, for some time, the relations between host and hostess had been somewhat strained ; but this state of affairs was generally ascribed to the irritability of the literary temperament on Dickens's part, and on Mrs Dickens's side to a little love of indolence and ease, such as, however, provoking to their husbands, is not uncommon among middle-aged matrons with large families ! . . . Dickens, the master of humour and pathos, the arch-compeller of tears and laughter, was in no sense an emotional man."

Forster writes that, though not altogether unsuspecting, he was shocked at receiving a letter from Dickens, of which this is the main portion : " Poor Catherine and I are not made for each other, and there is no help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so too—and much more so. She is exactly what you know, in the way of being amiable and complying ; but we are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us. God knows she would have been a thousand times happier if she had married another kind of man, and that her avoidance of this destiny would have been at least equally good for us both. I am often cut to the heart by thinking what a pity it is, for her own sake, that I ever fell in her way ; and if I were sick or disabled to-morrow, I know how sorry she would be, and how deeply grieved myself, to think how we had lost each other. But exactly the same incompatibility would arise, the moment I was well again ; and nothing on earth could make her understand me, or suit us to each other. Her temperament will not go with mine. It

mattered not so much when we had only ourselves to consider, but reasons have been growing since which make it all but hopeless that we should even try to struggle on. What is now befalling me I have seen steadily coming, ever since the days you remember when Mary was born ; and I know too well that you cannot, and no one can, help me." Then further on, " I claim no immunity from blame. There is plenty of fault on my side, I dare say, in the way of a thousand uncertainties, caprices, and difficulties of disposition ; but only one thing will alter all that, and that is the end which alters everything."

In the " Letter," he writes, " Mrs Dickens and I have lived unhappily together for many years. Hardly anyone who has known us intimately can fail to have known that we are, in all respects of character and temperament, wonderfully unsuited to each other. I suppose that no two people, not vicious in themselves, ever were joined together, who had a greater difficulty in understanding one another, or who had less in common." And, " For some years past Mrs Dickens has been in the habit of representing to me that it would be better for her to go away and live apart ; . . . that she felt herself unfit for the life she had to live as my wife, and that she would be better far away. I have uniformly replied that we must bear out our misfortune, and fight the fight out to the end ; that the children were the first consideration, and that I feared they must bind us together ' in appearance.' "

Then follows a statement which seems to point to a very curious omission on the part of Forster in his account of the separation :—" At length, within these three weeks, it was suggested to me by Forster that even for their sakes, it would surely be better to reconstruct

and rearrange their unhappy home. I empowered him to treat with Mrs Dickens, as the friend of both of us for one and twenty years. Mrs Dickens wished to add on her part, Mark Lemon, and did so. On Saturday last Lemon wrote to Forster that Mrs Dickens, ' gratefully and thankfully accepted ' the terms I proposed her."

In May, 1858, the separation took place, the eldest son going with his mother, the other children with their father.

Irritated by scandalous gossip, Dickens took the unwise step of taking the public into his confidence, acting against the advice of discreet friends and upon that of one—usually discreet—John Delane, the editor of *The Times*. In *Household Words* for June 12, under the heading " Personal," Dickens addressed his readers in a short paper, from which we give the following extracts :—

" My conspicuous position has often made me the subject of fabulous stories and unaccountable statements."

" Some domestic trouble of mine, of long-standing, on which I will make no further remark than that it claims to be respected, as being of a sacredly private nature, has lately been brought to an arrangement, which involves no anger or ill-will of any kind, and the whole origin, progress, and surrounding circumstances of which have been, throughout, within the knowledge of my children. It is amicably composed, and its details have now but to be forgotten by those concerned in it."

" I most solemnly declare, then—and this I do, both in my own name and in my wife's name—that all the lately whispered rumours touching the trouble at which I have glanced, are abominably false."

He quarrelled with Mark Lemon because a similar statement was not published in *Punch* !

Two more quotations, and we turn gladly from this unhappy incident.

" I well recollect," says the writer of " Leaves from a Life," speaking of a time after the separation, " being in a box at the theatre one evening with my mother and Mrs Dickens : the latter burst into tears suddenly and went back into the box. Charles Dickens had come into the opposite box with some friends, and she could not bear it. My mother took her back to her house in Gloucester Road, Regent's Park, telling me to sit quietly until she returned. When she did she said nothing to me, but I heard her tell Papa about it, and add ' I thought I should never be able to leave her ; that man is a brute.' Papa shrugged his shoulders and said nothing."

Shirley Brooks makes this entry in his diary, under date July 11th, 1870, " E " (Mrs Shirley Brooks) " called on Mrs Dickens, first time since the death. Describes her as looking well, being calm, and speaking of matters with a certain becoming dignity. Is resolved not to allow Forster, or any other biographer, to allege that she did not make D. a happy husband, having letters after the birth of her ninth child, in which D. writes like a lover. Her eldest daughter visited her and declared that the separation between *them* had resulted solely from her, Mary's, own self-will. Miss H. (Hogarth) has also visited her —I will not write about this, but the affair is to the honour of Mrs D.'s heart."

So we must leave the story, unable to pronounce judgment upon either party, one of whom spoke too much, the other being silent. It has only been told again —as far as it can yet be told—because it helps us to

understand the character of Charles Dickens. In conclusion, we cannot do better than quote with entire approbation Dr A. W. Ward's summing-up, "If he had ever loved his wife with that affection before which so-called incompatibilities of habits, temper, or disposition fade into nothingness, there is no indication of it in any of his numerous letters addressed to her. Neither has it ever been pretended that he strove in the direction of that resignation which love and duty together made possible to David Copperfield, or even that he remained in every way master of himself, as many men have known how to remain, the story of whose wedded life and its disappointments has never been written in history or figured in fiction."

XXXIII

GAD'S HILL

"THIS day," March 14, 1856, writes Dickens, "I have paid the purchase money for Gad's Hill Place." We need not do more than remind the reader of the story of the queer little boy who had hoped that one day this house might be his, which boy was Dickens. Nor does it come within our plan to give the events of Dickens's life during the years that Gad's Hill was his home; they have already been fully told in the pages of Forster; we shall merely glance at some of them.

Gad's Hill Place is situated on the old Dover Road, about half-way between Gravesend and Rochester. Until 1855 it was the home of the Reverend James Lynn, father of Mrs Lynn Linton. "Of the Lynn girls at Gad's Hill," writes Mr Layard, "we catch a pretty glimpse from no less a personage than one whom Mrs Linton believed to be the prototype of Dickens's creation, Tony Weller. His name was Chomley, and he was driver of the Rochester coach. When passing Gads' Hill House, he was wont to crack his long whip and say to the passengers, 'Now, gentlemen, I will show you the prettiest sight in all the country.' At the sound of the well-known crack, a bevy of bright, pretty young girls would appear at the window, nodding and smiling and kissing their hands to the delighted old Jehu."

In February, 1857, Dickens actually entered upon his new possession, of which we will give his own description, written to M de Cerjat in July, 1858; "At this present moment I am on my little Kentish freehold (*not* in top-boots, and not particularly prejudiced that I know of), looking on as pretty a view out of my study window as you will find in a long day's English ride. My little place is a grave red brick house (time of George the First, I suppose [1]), which I have added to and stuck bits upon in all manner of ways, so that it is as pleasantly irregular, and as violently opposed to all architectural ideas, as the most hopeful man could possibly desire. It is on the summit of Gad's Hill. The robbery was committed before the door, on the man with the treasure, and Falstaff ran away from the identical spot of ground now covered by the room in which I write. A little rustic alehouse, called The Sir John Falstaff, is over the way—has been over the way, ever since, in honour of the event. Cobham woods and Park are behind the house; the distant Thames in front; the Medway, with Rochester, and its old castle and cathedral, on one side."

In George Dolby's "Charles Dickens as I Knew Him" we find much interesting information concerning Gad's Hill and life there, which throws light upon the character of the master of the house. In the hall was prominent a capacious box for the reception of letters and so forth for the post, with the postal hours painted in big figures upon it. "A peculiarity of the household was the fact that, except at table, no servant was ever seen about. This was because the requirements of life were always ready to hand, especially in the bed-rooms. Each of these rooms contained the most comfortable of beds,

[1] Built in 1779.

a sofa, and easy-chair, cane-bottomed chairs—in which Mr Dickens had a great belief, always preferring to use one himself—a large-sized writing-table, profusely supplied with paper and envelopes of every conceivable size and description, and an almost daily change of new quill pens. There was a miniature library of books in each room, a comfortable fire in winter, with a shining copper kettle in each fireplace; and on a side-table, cups, saucers, tea-caddy, teapot, sugar and milk. . . ." Edmund Yates tells us that " Life at Gadshill for visitors, I speak from experience, was delightful. You breakfasted at nine, smoked your cigar, read the papers, and pottered about the garden until luncheon at one.[1] All the morning Dickens was at work. . . . After luncheon (a substantial meal, though Dickens generally took little but bread and cheese and a glass of ale) the party would assemble in the hall, which was hung round with a capital set of Hogarth prints. . . . Some walked, some drove, some pottered. . . . It was during one of these walks that Dickens showed me, in Cobham Park, the stile close by which, after a fearful struggle, Mr Dadd had been murdered by his lunatic son in 1843. Dickens acted the whole scene with his usual dramatic force. I had heard something of the story before from Frith, who is an excellent *raconteur*. The murderer then escaped, but was afterward secured: he had been travelling on a coach, and his homicidal tendencies had been aroused by regarding the large neck, disclosed by a very low collar, of a fellow-passenger, who, waking from a sleep, found Dadd's finger's (*sic*) playing round his throat. On searching Dadd's studio, after his arrest, they found, painted on the wall behind a screen, portraits of Egg, Stone, and Frith, Dadd's

[1] Dolby says 1.30.

intimate associates, *all with their throats cut*—a pleasant suggestion of their friend's intentions."

When in most houses the soup, the fish, in fact the whole "bill of fare" was placed upon the table at once and growing sodden under the covers, the dinner table at Gad's Hill was bright with flowers and the dishes were handed round. Marcus Stone says that it was the sweetest, cleanliest house he had ever been in, and, we know, that there was not a detail of household management in which Dickens did not take a personal interest. He was master of his house.

Of Dickens at Gad's Hill, Fields says, "on the lawn playing at bowls, in the Swiss summer-house charmingly shaded by green leaves, he always seemed the best part of summer, beautiful as the season is in the delightful region where he lived. . . . At his own table, surrounded by his family, and a few guests, old acquaintances from town,—among them sometimes Forster, Carlyle, Reade, Collins, Layard, Maclise, Stone, Macready, Talfourd,—he was always the choicest and liveliest companion. He was not what is called in society a professed talker, but he was something far better and rarer."

He, also, tells us, what is evident from other sources, that "Bright colours were a constant delight to him; and the gay hues of flowers were those most welcome to his eye. When the rhododendrons were in bloom in Cobham Park, the seat of his friend and neighbour, Lord Darnley, he always counted on taking his guests there to enjoy the magnificent show."

Holman Hunt gives a charming record of a conversation with Dickens at Gad's Hill in 1860. They got to talking about Shakespeare, and the painter asked the writer which was to him the most interesting passage in the works

of the dramatist. Dickens replied that the question was one difficult to answer, for that he loved so many, and then went on to speak of an incident in Henry IV., in Justice Shallow's house and orchard, and the arrival of Falstaff to enrol recruits; "and at last the scene," Dickens continued, "in Shallow's garden, with Justice Slender added to the party, and Falstaff returning from the Northern wars. As I read I can see the soft evening sky beneath the calm twilight air, and I can smell the steaming pippins as they are brought on to the table, and when I have ended my reading I remember all as if I had been present, and heard Falstaff and the whole company receiving the news of the King's death."

Across the road that runs in front of the house, was a shrubbery, to which access from the garden was gained by an underground passage, made by Dickens in 1859, and in this shrubbery was placed the Swiss châlet, given to him by Fechter, which came from Paris in ninety-four pieces; "I have put five mirrors in the châlet where I write," he says, "and they reflect and refract, in all kinds of ways, the leaves that are quivering at the windows, and the great fields of waving corn, and the sail-dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees; and the birds and the butterflies fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and the shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious."

When American friends came to see him here, there were high jinks and tremendous jauntings. Dolby mentions one such gathering—in the latter days, in June, 1869—when amongst others there were gathered together

Mr and Mrs J. T. Fields, Miss Mabel Lowell, a daughter of James Russell Lowell, and Mr and Mrs Childs of Philadelphia, who were astonished at the wonderful singing of the nightingales. " One of the most delightful days of this visit was occupied by a drive from Gad's Hill to Canterbury, a distance of twenty-nine miles, over the old Dover Road, through Rochester, Chatham, Sittingbourne, and Faversham.

" We were to make an early start, so as to give plenty of time for luncheon, in a beautiful spot already chosen, and allow for a ramble afterwards.

" Two post carriages were turned out with postillions, in the red jackets of the old Royal Dover Road, buckskin breeches, and top-boots into the bargain.

" The preparations for this new pilgrimage to Canterbury were of the most lavish description, and I can see now the hampers and wine baskets blocking the steps of the house before they were packed in the carriages.

" Every one was in the best of spirits, the weather was all that could be desired, and the ladies did honour to it by the brightness of their costumes. We were all glad, too, that the restoration of the Chief's health enabled him to enjoy as much pleasure himself as he was giving to his friends.

" We started sharp to time, and travelled merrily over the road, with hop gardens on either side, until we reached Rochester, our horses making such a clatter in this slumbrous old city that all the shopkeepers in the main street turned out to see us pass.

" Mr Dickens rode in the foremost carriage, and having occasion to pull up at the shop of one of the tradesmen in the main street of Rochester, a small crowd collected round the carriages. It seemed to be pretty generally

known amongst them that Dickens was of the party, and we got a good deal of fun out of the mistake made by a man in the crowd, who pointed up at Mr James T. Fields, and called out, 'That's Dickens!' Poor Fields was in great confusion, especially when Mr Dickens, to complete the deception, handed up a small parcel to him, with the request, 'Here you are, Dickens, take charge of this for me.'

"Away we went again through Rochester, and, skirting Chatham, were soon again in the open country on the road to Sittingbourne, where a relay of horses was awaiting us.

"A short rest in the brick-making town was quite sufficient for us, and we sped on to that haven of rest where it had been arranged that we should lunch. A more suitable spot could not have been found. It lay in the deep shades of a wood, with a rippling stream running through.

"The breakfast hour had been an early one, and the long drive had given an excellent edge to our appetites. We turned to with a ready will to unload the carriages, and carry the baskets into the wood. Everybody did something, and the cloth was speedily laid. An hour was the time allowed for luncheon, and out of this we had to let the postillions get their meal when we had finished. Dickens would not let us start again until every vestige of our visit to the wood in the shape of lobster shells and other *débris*, had been removed.

"We drove into Canterbury in the early afternoon, just as the bells of the Cathedral were ringing for afternoon service. Entering the quiet city under the old gate at the end of the High Street, it seemed as though its inhabitants were indulging in an afternoon's nap

after a midday dinner. But our entry and the clatter of our horses' hoofs roused them as it had done the people of Rochester, and they came running to their windows and out into the streets to learn what so much noise might mean.

"We turned into the bye-street in which the Fountain Hotel is situated, where the carriages and horses were to be put up while we explored the city. . . . We took tea at the hotel, and then at about six o'clock started on our homeward journey, Canterbury having by this time quite got over the effects of its day-sleep. The people were enjoying their stroll in the cool of the evening, and the streets presented a much more animated appearance than they had done on our arrival.

"In the interval between drowsiness and wakefulness, Canterbury had evidently summoned sufficient energy to make inquiries about our party; and learning that no less a person than Charles Dickens was responsible for having disturbed their slumbers earlier in the day, the good people at once forgave us all, and were quite hearty in their salutations as we left the town.

"There was never a more delightful ride on a summer's evening than the one we took then. The day was fast closing in, and as there was no reason for loitering on the road, we sped along at a rattling pace.

"The journey from Gad's Hill to Canterbury had taken nearly five hours, including the time allowed for luncheon and loitering. The journey home was made in less than three, and we forgot our fatigue in the enjoyment of supper. It seems to me, as I look back over the years that have intervened, that I enjoyed a great privilege, no less than a rare pleasure, in being in the company of my dear old Chief when he took this his last visit to

Canterbury, in the streets of which he had so often wandered in his earlier days."

On another occasion, really a business meeting, W. H. Palmer, the manager of Niblo's Theatre, New York, and Benjamin Webster, the English actor, were present, and in the billiard room a match was arranged between the two, Dickens acting as marker.

"The disparity between the players appeared to be very great, for the American was in the prime of life, whereas the Englishman was far advanced in years and very feeble. Dickens, however, who knew Mr Webster's 'form,' opened the betting by backing him to win. Fechter backed his new manager, and the rest of the company held aloof from the market for a time. It must be said that the bets were of a very trifling description, for Dickens always set his face against gambling.

"The game was closely contested, but Webster carried it off. Notwithstanding his great age and infirmity, it was most entertaining to see with what unerring certainty he made his strokes, although before each one it took him some moments to make his bridge. Dickens was delighted at his old friend's success, but to me he said—'Bless you! that's nothing. Ben, as a young man, was in the habit of tossing in the streets with pie-men for pies, and invariably won!'"

A semi-theatrical friend, who gave to Dickens Linda, the splendid St Bernard that was one of the ornaments of Gad's Hill Place, was Albert Smith, Albert Richard being his full name. He was born in 1816, and educated at Merchant Taylor's School, afterward studying at the Middlesex Hospital, in these student days sharing rooms with Leech. Edmund Yates has much to tell us of Albert Smith, whose initials Jerrold unkindly said were

only " two thirds of the truth." He writes, " A man of thirty-five years of age, with large head, large body, short legs; long hair, long reddish-brown beard and moustache, small keen deep-set gray eyes, good acquiline nose, small hands and feet; always badly dressed: when at home at work, he wore a short blue blouse, such as is to be seen on all the Swiss peasants, and an old pair of trousers; in the street he was given to gaudy neckkerchiefs, and had a festoon of ' charms ' dangling from his watch-chain." His famous Mont Blanc entertainment was produced on March 15, 1852, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, and was an immense success. His wife was Miss Mary Keeley, daughter of the famous actress.

Sala paid a visit to Albert Smith, in Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, when he, the latter, was about thirty, and gives in his " Life and Adventures " a capital account of the event :—" I can recall him, as a sturdy-looking, broad-shouldered, short-necked man, with grey eyes, and flowing locks of light brown, and large side-whiskers; later in life he wore a beard. . . . His voice was a high treble; his study was like a curiosity shop. . . . Littered about the room, which was on the ground floor, were piles of French novels, in yellow paper covers, dolls, caricatures, toys of every conceivable kind, a *débardeuse* silk shirt, crimson sash, and velvet trousers, the white linen raiment of a Pierrot, cakes of soap from Vienna made in the similitude of fruit, iron jewellery from Berlin, . . . miniature Swiss chalets, porcelain and meerschaum pipes—although Albert was no smoker—and the model of a French *diligence*. The owner of this queer assemblage of odds and ends was clad in a blue blouse. . . . He was one of the kindest and cheeriest of mankind."

Serjeant Ballantine, who was a close friend of his,

goes so far as to credit Albert Smith with genius, to which length few will accompany him who have read his novels, which, though full of life and humour, are not works which give him a claim to such a lofty standing. With the rest of the Serjeant's description of him it is easier to agree :—" As a companion he was full of fun, and bubbled over with high spirits. He had passed some years of his early life in Paris in the study of medicine, and could record many an amusing scene of the Quartier Latin. He spoke French fluently, and the good-looking, fair-haired young Englishman must have been a favoured partner at the dances, when grisettes, now a departed class, after the honest labour of the day, indulged in much joyousness without coarseness or crime."

It was a time of great rejoicing when, in the summer of 1860, Miss Kate Dickens married Charles Alston Collins, younger brother of Wilkie. He was born in 1828. He had studied art, joining the Pre-Raphaelites, and given proofs of rare abilities, but his health was not strong, and he turned to literature, contributing some charming essays to *All The Year Round*. He died in 1873, and, as Forster says, " until then it was not known, even by those nearest to him, how great must have been the suffering which he had borne, through many trying years, with uncomplaining patience."

Among those present at the wedding were Holman Hunt, as best man, Mary Boyle, Marguerite Power, Fechter, Edmund Yates, Percy Fitzgerald, W. H. Wills and his wife, Henry Chorley, Chauncey Hare Townshend, and Wilkie Collins.

XXXIV

CHARLES ALBERT FECHTER

NEXT after Macready it is safe to count Charles Fechter as Dickens's most intimate friend among the players. He used to say of himself that his father was a German, his mother French, and that he "breathed" in Hanway Yard, Oxford Street, where he saw the light in the year 1824. He received some education as an artist, but the stage attracted him too strongly to resist the call, and he first trod the boards, as an amateur, at the Salle Molière in "Le Mari de la Veuve." After studying at the Conservatoire, he toured in Italy, and between 1844-60 made various appearances at the Comédie Française, Vaudeville, Ambigu Comique, Variétes, Porte St Martin, Odéon. By all accounts he was an actor of rare romantic charm and sincerity. His first striking success appears to have been made in "La Dame aux Camélias" and he was the original Luis and Fabien in "The Corsican Brothers." In 1845 he appeared with a French troupe in London, in 1846 acted in Berlin, and made his first appearance in English at the Princess's Theatre on October 27, 1860, in "Ruy Blas." To complete this brief sketch of his biography, before turning to the man and the actor: he first acted "Hamlet" in March, 1861; undertook the management of the Lyceum Theatre in 1863, opening with "The Duke's Motto." Four years later he went

to the Adelphi Theatre, where he produced and acted the leading part in Charles Dickens's and Wilkie Collins's "No Thoroughfare." In 1870 he went to the United States, where he died in 1879 on his farm near Philadelphia.

John Hollingshead states that if he had any private financial supporter—a "backer"—it was Dickens, and that when Fechter went to America he owed him several thousand pounds, a debt every farthing of which was paid off.

Socially he was a genial, blustering, kind fellow, with a very good conceit of himself. Of small talk he had no great supply, but was possessed of a wonderful gift of mimicry, which afforded high entertainment. In "Leaves from a Life" he is described as "a stout, fleshy-looking man, with rather long hair and very beautiful hands, feet, and legs; and his voice, despite his extremely strong accent, was very delightful." Edmund Yates says of him, he "was singularly abstemious in those days, eating little and drinking nothing but weak claret-and-water, though he had a good cellar, and was especially proud of some 1820 port, which he was always offering to his friends; a man of singular fascination, and amiability, though intolerant of humbug, and savage where he disliked." The following from Herman Charles Merivale's entertaining volume, "Bar, Stage and Platform" is too good to quote otherwise than in full:—

"Fechter's appearance as an English actor followed shortly after Charles Kean's retirement from management, and, too soon, from life. And Kean was more amusing about 'that Frenchman' than about anything else. His own French, it must be admitted, was purest Captain of the Boats. 'Shattow-Reddow,' with a strong emphasis

on the first syllables, was his way of dwelling on the duellist, whom Fechter dismissed as 'Châteaurenaud' all in one syllable, as the man of Killarney contrived to do, they say, with McGillicuddy's Reeks. That any Frenchman should act in English at all was too much for that Etonian spirit. But that he should act any of his—Kean's—parts, was sacrilege. Why, it was worse than 'Dillod.' Some rash intruder accused Kean of having had hints from Fechter about his Mephistopheles —a strong stage picture of the popular fiend from the jocular stand-point, but memorable—and he admitted it with a reservation. When he grew excited, his m's and n's were wont to get more mixed than ever with him. 'Taught me, did he? Dab his impudence. I went to see him in Paris, and he showed me how to bake by dose.'

"Nevertheless, it is by right of his Hamlet and Iago that Fechter takes his rank with me. Of all my actors of romance he was the best, and in that light he made those parts quite daringly his own. It has been told of 'W. G.' the cricketer, that when he made his first appearance at Brighton with his new methods, Alfred Shaw the bowler, after the match was over, complained to an old chum—the umpire, who had not seen Grace before—that he never bowled so well in his life, and that he was always being hit for four or six against the rules. 'It's all very well,' he said, 'but it ain't cricket.' 'Well, Alfred, I dunno,' answered the pal. 'If you bowls him all you knows, and he cobs you out of the ground every time, I calls it cricket, and —— good cricket too.' So did an astonished world remark of Fechter's Hamlet that it was very wonderful, but wasn't Shakespeare. Well, perhaps not, though only Shakespeare knows.

But if a Hamlet fairly sweeps you off your feet in a whirl of new excitement, in the scenes in which you have been most accustomed to methods of quite another kind, I call it Shakespeare, and —— good Shakespeare too. My umpire in this case was a quaint old box-keeper who had served under Kean, and remained at the Princess's when Fechter was there. Of course we were old friends, and when I went to see the Frenchman's Hamlet, I asked him what he thought about it before the play began. 'Sir!' he said, 'it's wonderful. We all know Mr Kean. Mr Kean was great. But with 'im, *'Amlet* was a tragedy, with Mr Fechter it's quite another thing. He has raised it to a mellerdram.' And in its stirring sense of action, with his vivid stage-management, and with his romantic, volcanic, lawless personality, that is exactly what Mr Fechter did."

Dickens first saw him act in Paris, "He was making love to a woman, and he so elevated her as well as himself by the sentiment in which he enveloped her, that they trod in a purer ether, and in another sphere, quite lifted out of the present. . . . I never saw two people more purely and instantly elevated by the power of love. . . . The man has genius in him which is unmistakeable."

The friendship and admiration of the two, each for the other, became firm and strong; Forster tells us that Dickens was "his helper in disputes, adviser on literary points, referee in matters of management; and for some years no face was more familiar than the French comedian's at Gad's Hill or in the office of his journal."

Dickens contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly* a paper "On Mr Fechter's Acting," from which quotation will serve the double purpose of showing Dickens as a dramatic critic and Fechter as an actor. "The first quality obser-

vable in Mr Fechter's acting," he writes, " is, that it is in the highest degree romantic. However elaborated in minute details, there is always a peculiar dash and vigor in it, like the fresh atmosphere of the story whereof it is a part. When he is on the stage, it seems to me as though the story were transpiring before me for the first and last time. Thus there is a fervor in his love-making—a suffusion of his whole being with the rapture of his passion—that sheds a glory on its object and raises her, before the eyes of the audience, into the light in which he sees her." Again, " Picturesqueness is a quality above all others pervading Mr Fechter's assumptions. Himself a skilled painter and sculptor, learned in the history of costume, and informing those accomplishments and that knowledge with a similar infusion of romance (for romance is inseparable from the man), he is always a picture,—always a picture in its right place in the group, always in true composition with the background of the scene." Lastly, " Mr Fechter has been in the main more accustomed to speak French than to speak English, and therefore he speaks our language with a French accent. But whosoever should suppose that he does not speak English fluently, plainly, distinctly, and with a perfect understanding of the meaning, weight, and value of every word, would be greatly mistaken."

XXXV

THE WEARING OF A BEARD

IN 1859, Forster commissioned from Frith a portrait of Dickens, which he had suggested some time before, but the painting had been postponed until such time as Dickens should see fit to shave off his moustache, an ornament which on the author's face Forster considered a disfigurement. But to the moustache was added a "door-knocker" beard, and in terror lest whiskers should also appear, the portrait was put in hand. The painter describes the alteration that had taken place in Dickens's appearance since Maclise had painted him some twenty-five years before; the complexion had grown florid, the long hair shorter and darker, and, he adds, "the expression settled into that of one who had reached the topmost rung of a very high ladder, and was perfectly aware of his position." Dickens proved to be a capital sitter, chatty and anecdotal. Speaking of the surprise expressed by many who on meeting him for the first time found him to be unlike their preconceived ideas, "for instance," he said, "Scheffer, who is a big man—said, the moment he saw me, 'You are not at all like what I expected to see you; you are like a Dutch skipper.' As for the picture he did of me, I can only say that it is neither like me nor a Dutch skipper." Frith's portrait may, on the whole, be considered a success, though Dickens says of it, "It is a little too much (to

CHARLES DICKENS (1859).

From the Oil Sketch by W. P. Frith, R.A., for the Portrait in the Forster Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum.

my thinking) as if my next-door neighbour were my deadly foe, uninsured, and I had just received tidings of his house being afire ; otherwise very good." While Edwin Landseer said, " I wish he looked less eager and busy, and not so much out of himself, or beyond himself. I should like to catch him asleep and quiet now and then."

But to return to the beard.

When remonstrated with upon this " disfigurement," Dickens responded that " the beard saved him the trouble of shaving, and much as he admired his own appearance before he allowed his beard to grow, he admired it much more now, and never neglected, when an opportunity offered, to gaze his fill at himself. If his friends didn't like his looks, he was not at all anxious for them to waste their time in studying them ; and as to Frith, he would surely prefer to save himself the trouble of painting features which were so difficult as a mouth and chin. Besides, he had been told by some of his friends that they highly approved of the change, because they now saw less of him." He was, indeed, delighted with these adornments, and says, " the moustaches are glorious, glorious. I have cut them shorter, and trimmed them a little at the ends to improve their shape. They are charming, charming. Without them, life would be a blank." But Sir Richard Owen speaks of him in 1862 as " not improved in appearance by the scanty beard he has now grown. I think his face is spoiled by it."

The background was painted at Tavistock House. Not only was the beard a stumbling-block, but there were also questions of dress. Dickens arrived at the artist's studio in a sky-blue overcoat with red cuffs ! The artist protested, the sitter succumbed, remarking that he was

" very fond of colour." One of the artist's daughters has described Dickens at this period as " rather florid in his dress, and gave me an impression of gold chain and pin and an enormous tie, and he too, as did so many men then, wore his hair long, with the usual waving lock above his forehead."

On the other hand, the American historian Motley met Dickens at Forster's in 1861 ; " his hair is not much grizzled and is thick, although the crown of his head is getting bald. His features are very good, the nose rather high, the eyes largish, greyish, and very expressive. He wears a moustache and beard, and dresses at dinner in exactly the same uniform which every man in London or the civilized world is bound to wear. . . . I mention this because I had heard that he was odd and extravagant in his costume. I liked him exceedingly. We sat next each other at table, and I found him genial, sympathetic, agreeable, unaffected, with plenty of light easy talk and touch-and-go fun without any effort or humbug of any kind."

Here again is a contrary view, given by James Hain Friswell's daughter Laura, who was passing the office of *Household Words* in Wellington Street, " when a hansom cab stopped, and out stepped a gaily-dressed gentleman ; his bright green waistcoat and vivid scarlet tie anyone would have noticed, but the size of the nosegay in his buttonhole rivetted my attention."

While upon the subject of costume, this is a quaint sketch of one worn by Mr Frith, who was seated near the altar at the Prince of Wales's wedding (in 1863), G. A. Sala noting the difference between the Court dress of then and now. Frith " was in shorts, silk stockings, a snuff-coloured coat, with cut steel buttons, a brocaded waistcoat,

a black silk bag without a wig to it and a *jabot* with ruffles."

Of William Powell Frith, R.A., painter of "The Derby Day," "Ramsgate Sands," "The Railway Station," and many another picture that lingers in the memory, what shall be said but that those who would know him should turn to his delightful volumes of reminiscences, which are a gold mine to all students of Victorian social life and a treasure house to lovers of anecdote? It will suffice, here, to note that he was born in 1819 at Oldfield, in Yorkshire, to which we may add the detail—amusing to lovers of "Nicholas Nickleby"—that on coming up to London town he alighted at the Saracen's Head, upon Snow Hill.

At Dickens's request Frith, in 1842, painted a "Dolly Varden" and a "Kate Nickleby," of which Dickens said, "All I can say is, they are exactly what I meant"; he paid the artist £40 for the pair, which after his death were sold for thirteen hundred guineas. Frith describes Dickens as then "a pale young man with long hair, a white hat, a formidable stick in his left hand."

XXXVI

THE READINGS

JOHN HOLLINGSHEAD gives an interesting account of a dinner with Dickens at the office of *Household Words* in Wellington Street, Strand, in January, 1858, on the day of the marriage of the Princess Royal, when the town was thronged with visitors and profusely illuminated in the evening. Besides Dickens and Hollingshead there were present W. H. Wills, Wilkie Collins, quietly amiable, Mark Lemon, "a fat, cheery man, not very refined, with eyes not as keen as Dickens's but with a similar twinkle," and the Hon. —— Townshend,[1] a man of money and of poetic gifts. Dickens was clad in a velvet smoking jacket, and Hollingshead writes, "I noticed, as I thought then, a slight lisp, the deep lines on his face—almost furrows, and the keen twinkling glance of his eye."

Mrs Keeley used to tell an anecdote of Dickens, in which mention is made of this lisp, "I remember Dickens telling me, in his rapid, earnest way, and with a slight lisp which he had, 'Ah! when you're young you want to be old; when you're getting old you want to be young; and when you're really old you're proud of your years.'" The dining-room was on the ground floor, and the menu simple but excellent, including oysters, brought in from Rule's, hard by in Maiden Lane, and a baked leg of mutton, minus the bone which was

[1] Query—the Rev. Chauncy Hare Townshend?

replaced by a stuff of oysters and veal. The talk apparently did not rise to any very high level, but was bright and amusing. Food was one of the topics, and Wilkie Collins gave vent to the truly British opinion that not only was there not much in the art of cooking, but that there was not anything among French or Italian dishes "that could beat a well-made, well-cooked apple pudding." Theatrical affairs coming upon the carpet. Dickens lamented the existence of the "star" system, After dinner Dickens compounded some of his famous "Gin Punch," the making of which delectable drink was apparently a serious ceremony :—"The preparations for this drink were elaborate and ostentatious. The kettle was put on the fire ; lemons were carefully cut and peeled ; a jug was produced, and well rubbed with a napkin, inside and out ; glasses were treated in the same manner ; the bottle was produced, the gin tasted and approved of, and the brew then began. The boiling water was poured in, the sugar, carefully calculated, was added, the spirit, also carefully calculated, was poured in, the lemon was dropped on the top, the mouth of the jug was then closed by stuffing in the napkin rolled up like a ball, and then the process of perfect production was timed with a watch. Dickens's manner all this time was that of a comic conjurer, with a little of the pride of one who had made a great discovery for the benefit of humanity."

It is acknowledged on all hands that the actor's act is ephemeral, and that it is impossible to convey to anyone not present at the performance anything approaching the actuality of an actor's personality, ability, and charm. Dickens's readings were practically a theatrical performance, without costumes or scenery, in which the performer enacted all the characters of the play. We

cannot hope, therefore, to do more than convey some vague idea of the nature of the entertainment and of the effect it produced upon those who witnessed it.

When Dickens realised the immense popularity of unpaid readings, given mostly in the cause of charity, it occurred naturally enough to him to undertake paid readings for his own profit. The question was raised by him, not for the first time, in a letter from Gad's Hill to Forster, in which he says, " What do you think of my paying for this place, by reviving that old idea of some Readings from my books. I am very strongly tempted." Forster was, we hold quite wisely, opposed to the notion ; " it was," he writes, " a substitution of lower for higher aims ; a change to commonplace from more elevated pursuits ; and it had so much of the character of a public exhibition for money as to raise, in the question of respect for his calling as a writer, a question also of respect for himself as a gentleman." We agree with Forster's conclusion, but not with his reasoning ; this anxiety about gentlemanliness smacks sadly of snobbery. The arguments against Dickens pursuing the course he proposed, were, we hold, that it would, if a success, prove a serious and probably dangerous strain upon his bodily health, and that the vividness of the actor's life—for such it really would be —would have a tendency to exaggerate the already too strong leaning toward theatricalism and sentimentality that was already a weakness in both the man and his art. Almost simultaneously came three great changes in his life, the separation from his wife, the acquirement of a country house, and this plunge into the life of a public entertainer.

We shall make no attempt to trace the various reading

tours in detail; the first series took place in 1858-59, the second in 1861-63, the third in 1864-67, and the final readings in 1868-70.

Hollingshead gives a vivid picture of him at his 'desk,' which in some details differs from any other we have :— "He stood erect before his audience, with his head thrown back, his large eyes bright with a sense of enjoyment of what he was doing, confident, unfaltering, with one hand resting firmly on a paper-knife planted upright on the table. He was a comparatively small man, with long thin hair, beard, and a face prematurely furrowed, a bronzed complexion, earned by much walking in the open air, and a voice with a slight dash of lisping hoarseness. Though a very bad sailor, he might have been taken for a sea captain. His first words sounded like a trumpet blast of assured victory. 'Marly was dead! There was no mistake about that!'"

Of April 28, 1863, Carlyle records that "I had to go . . . to Dickens's Reading, 8 P.M., Hanover Rooms, to the complete upsetting of my evening habitudes and spiritual composure. Dickens does it capitally, such as *it* is; acts better than any Macready in the world; a whole trajic, comic, heroic *theatre* visible, performing under one *hat*, and keeping us laughing—in a sorry way, some of us thought—the whole night. He is a good creature, too, and makes fifty or sixty pounds by each of these readings."

When Dickens was sitting to Frith for his portrait, the painter ventured, greatly daring, to criticise the novelist's rendering of Sam Weller, which to him seemed wrong, Sam's quaint sayings being delivered with lowered voice, as though the utterer of them were afraid that his freedom might call down reproof. Dickens listened,

smiled, made no comment. But Frith was informed by a friend, who shortly afterward heard Dickens read, that Sam's sayings were delivered " like pistol-shots."

Edmund Yates says that Arthur Smith, Dickens's " manager," " a timid man by nature," was among those who were nervous as to the success of the Readings, " but the moment Dickens stepped upon the platform,[1] walking rather stiffly, right shoulder well forward, as usual, bud in button-hole, and gloves in hand, all doubt was blown into the air. He was received with a roar of cheering which might have been heard at Charing Cross, and which was again and again renewed. Whatever he may have felt, Dickens showed no emotion. He took his place at his reading-desk, and made a short prefatory speech, in which he said that, though he had read one of his books to a London audience more than once, this was the first time he had ventured to do so professionally ; that he had considered the matter, and saw no reason against his doing so, either in deterioration of dignity or anything else ; and that, therefore, he took his place on the platform with as much composure as he should at his own desk."

Of Arthur Smith, Dickens wrote to Yates, " Arthur is something between a Home Secretary and a furniture-dealer in Rathbone Place. He is either always corresponding in the genteelest manner, or dragging rout-seats about without his coat," and again, of a famous night at Liverpool, " Arthur, bathed in checks, took headers into tickets, floated on billows of passes, dived under weirs of shillings, staggered home faint with gold and silver." From Scarborough to Miss Hogarth, he writes, " Yesterday, at Harrogate, two circumstances occurred

[1] At St Martin's Hall, Long Acre.

which gave Arthur great delight. Firstly, he chafed his leg sore with his black bag of silver. Secondly, the landlord asked him as a favour, 'If he could oblige him with a little silver.' He obliged him directly with some forty pounds' worth," and, "Arthur told you, I suppose, that he had his shirt-front and waistcoat torn off last night? He was perfectly enraptured in consequence."

Yates, who knew him well, describes Arthur Smith as "a man full of cleverness of a quaint kind, of a remarkably sweet disposition and winning manner, and of . . . singular aptitude for business. He, too, had been a medical student, but up to this period had made no particular mark in life,[1] the only incident in his career worth mention having been his marriage with an heiress."

In 1861, he was attacked with an illness, which in the autumn took a serious turn. Forster gives an account by Dickens of an interview with the sick man; "his wakings and wanderings so perpetually turn on his arrangements for the Readings, and he is so desperately unwilling to relinquish the idea of 'going on with the business' to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow, that I had not the heart to press him for the papers." He died in October; "it is as if my right arm were gone," Dickens wrote to Forster, and from Ispwich, in November, to Miss Hogarth, "I miss poor Arthur dreadfully. It is scarcely possible to imagine how much. It is not only that his loss to me socially is quite irreparable, but that the sense I used to have of compactness and comfort about me when I was reading is quite gone. And when I come

[1] He had his first opportunity of showing his business qualities in managing the Mont Blanc show of his brother Albert.

out for the ten minutes, when I used to find him always ready for me with something cheerful to say, it is forlorn."

Arthur Smith was a born show-man and acting manager. When his brother Albert's " Show " was on at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly—now gone—he delayed the opening of the doors until some few minutes after the advertised time, so creating an uproar and block of the traffic, and when remonstrated with, expressed himself as quite ready to pay fifty pounds for five minutes more !

A few episodes " on the road " may be mentioned here. From York Dickens writes to Forster," I was brought very near to what I sometimes dream may be my Fame, when a lady whose face I had never seen stopped me yesterday in the street, and said to me, *Mr Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends.*" At Newcastle there was nearly a disaster, " An extraordinary thing occurred on the second night. The room was tremendously crowded and my gas apparatus fell down. There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew that the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her, laughing, and half-asked and half-ordered her to sit down again ; and, in a moment, it was all over."

Forster tells a sorry story of the damaging effect wrought upon Dickens's health of this life of wild and exhausting excitement, and his nerves were still further shaken by the terrible railway accident at Staplehurst, in which he was involved, on June 9, 1865. Ten people were killed and fifty-two injured out of one hundred and ten passengers in the " Tidal " train from Folkestone, in which Dickens was travelling. The bridge, between Headcorn and Staple-

hurst, was being repaired ; the permanent way was under repair, and the ganger in charge of the workmen miscalculated the hour at which the " Tidal " was due to pass. It was a blazing hot day, and the flagman instead of going out the regulation one thousand yards went but five hundred. The train tore up along the straight stretch—to destruction ; the engine, the tender, the guard's van, and one carriage escaped safely, but the rest of the train broke over the bridge, falling in an awful heap of wreck into the field below, with the one exception of the carriage in which Dickens was riding, which " hung suspended and balanced in an apparently impossible manner," wrote Dickens in a letter to Thomas Mitton ; " Two ladies were my fellow-passengers, an old one and a young one. This is exactly what passed—you may judge of the precise length of the suspense. Suddenly we were off the rail and beating the ground as the car of a half-emptied balloon might. The old lady cried out, ' My God ! ' and the young one screamed. I caught hold of them both (the old lady sat opposite and the young one on my left) and said : ' We can't help ourselves, but we can be quiet and composed. Pray don't cry out.' The old lady immediately answered, ' Thank you ; rely on me. Upon my soul, I will be quiet.' We were then all tilted together down in a corner of the carriage, and stopped. I said to them thereupon : ' You may be sure nothing worse can happen. Our danger must be over. Will you remain here without stirring while I get out of the window ? ' They both answered quite collectedly, ' Yes,' and I got out without the least notion of what had happened. Fortunately I got out with great caution, and stood upon the steps. Looking down, I saw the bridge gone and nothing below me but the line of rails. Some people in the two

other compartments were madly trying to plunge out of the window, and had no idea that there was an open, swampy field below them and nothing else. The two guards (one with his face cut) were running up and down, on the down side of the bridge, quite wildly. I called out to them, ' Look at me. Do stop an instant and look at me and tell me whether you don't know me.' One of them answered, ' We know you very well, Mr Dickens.' ' Then,' I said, ' my good fellow, for God's sake give me your key and send me one of those labourers here and I'll empty this carriage.' We did it quite safely by means of a plank or two, and when it was done I saw all the rest of the train, except the two baggage-vans, down in the stream. I got into the carriage again for my brandy flask, took off my travelling hat for a basin, climbed down the brickwork, and filled my hat with water. Suddenly I came upon a staggering man covered with blood (I think he must have been flung clean out of his carriage) with such a frightful cut across his skull that I couldn't bear to look at him. I poured some water over his face and gave him some brandy, and laid him down on the grass, and he said, ' I am gone ! ' and afterwards died.

" Then I stumbled over a lady lying on her back against a little pollard tree, with the blood running over her face (which was lead colour) in a number of distinct little streams from her head. I asked her if she could swallow a little brandy, and she just nodded, and I gave her some, and left her for somebody else. The next time I passed her she was dead.

" Then a man who was examined at the inquest yesterday (who had evidently not the least remembrance of what really passed) came running up to me and implored me to help to find his wife, who was afterwards found dead.

" No imagination can conceive the ruin of the carriages or the extraordinary weights under which people were lying, or the complications into which they were twisted up among iron and wood and mud and water."

Of the dreadful effect the accident had upon him we obtain a vivid picture in a letter written by Dickens in August, 1868, to M de Cerjat; " My escape in the Staplehurst accident of three years ago is not to be obliterated from my nervous system. To this hour, I have sudden vague rushes of terror, even when riding in a hansom cab, which are perfectly unreasonable but quite insurmountable. I used to make nothing of driving a pair of horses habitually through the most crowded parts of London. I cannot now drive, with comfort to myself, on the County roads here [1]; and I doubt if I could ride at all in the saddle. My reading secretary and companion knows so well when one of these odd momentary seizures comes upon me in a railway carriage, that he instantly produces a dram of brandy, which rallies the blood to the heart and generally prevails."

[1] Gad's Hill.

XXXVII

AMERICA REVISITED

A FEW days after Stanfield's death, Dickens wrote to Forster, "Poor dear Stanfield! I cannot think even of him, and of our great loss, for this spectre of doubt and indecision that sits at the board with me and stands at the bedside. I am in a tempest-tossed condition, and can hardly believe that I stand at bay at last on the American question. The difficulty of determining amid the variety of statements made to me is enormous, and you have no idea how heavily the anxiety of it sits upon my soul. But the prize looks so large!" The spectre was the proposal that he should give the Readings in America; eventually he decided to do so, and in November, 1867, he arrived at Boston, accompanied by George Dolby, upon whom had fallen the mantle of Arthur Smith, and of whom Dickens speaks as "an agreeable companion, an excellent manager, and a good fellow." He died in October, 1900. To him all Dickensians owe a debt of gratitude for his volume, "Charles Dickens as I Knew Him, The Story of the Reading Tours in Great Britain and America (1866-1870)."

Financially, artistically, socially, the tour was immensely successful, but there cannot be any doubt that it had a most deleterious effect upon Dickens's breaking health. Almost the whole time he was suffering from a distressing catarrh. Indeed, he was at times seriously

ill, as for example at Baltimore, of which he writes, " That afternoon of my birthday, my catarrh was in such a state that Charles Sumner coming in at five o'clock, and finding me covered with mustard poultice, and apparently voiceless, turned to Dolby and said: ' Surely, Mr Dolby, it is impossible that he can read to-night ! ' Says Dolby : ' Sir, I have told Mr Dickens so, four times to-day, and I have been very anxious. But you have no idea how he will change, when he gets to the little table.' After five minutes of the little table I was not (for the time) even hoarse. The frequent experience of this return of force when it is wanted, saves me a vast amount of anxiety ; but I am not at times without the nervous dread that I may some day sink altogether." In one of his last letters from America, to his daughter Mary, from Boston, he says, " I not only read last Friday when I was doubtful of being able to do so, but read as I never did before, and astonished the audience quite as much as myself. You never saw or heard such a scene of excitement. Longfellow and all the Cambridge men have urged me to give in. I have been very near doing so, but feel stronger to-day. I cannot tell whether the catarrh may have done me any lasting injury in the lungs or other breathing organs, until I shall have rested and got home. . . . Dolby is as tender as a woman, and as watchful as a doctor. He never leaves me during the reading, now, but sits at the side of the platform, and keeps his eye upon me all the time."

During the visit Dickens refreshed many old and made many new friendships, though he avoided social festivities as far as possible. In New York he met Henry Ward Beecher, whom he described as " an unostentatious, evidently able, straightforward, and agreeable man ;

extremely well informed, and with a good knowledge of art." At Washington he spent an evening with Charles Sumner, "he was specially pleased with his intercourse with Mr Stanton, who on being started with a chapter from any of Mr Dickens's books, could repeat the whole of the chapter from memory, and, as the author confessed, knew more about his works than he himself did. This was accounted for by the fact that during the war, when Mr Stanton was Commander-in-Chief of the Northern forces, he never went to bed at night without first reading something from one of Mr Dickens's books." Of President Andrew Johnson, Dickens writes, "I was very much surprised by the President's face and manner. It is, in its way, one of the most remarkable faces I have ever seen. Not imaginative, but very powerful in its firmness (or, perhaps, obstinacy), strength of will, and steadiness of purpose. There is a reticence in it, too, curiously at variance with that first unfortunate speech of his. A man not to be turned or trifled with. A man (I should say) who must be killed to be got out of the way. His manner is perfectly composed. We looked at one another pretty hard. There was an air of chronic anxiety upon him; but not a crease or a ruffle in his dress, and his papers were as composed as himself."

At a dinner at Longfellow's there were present beside "mine host" and the "guest of the evening," Agassiz, Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Bayard Taylor, and Dolby, "and the fun flew fast and furious."

Dolby gives an interesting reminiscence of Dickens and the art of speech making :—

"I remember in England on one occasion, when Mr Wilkie Collins joined us at supper after a Reading in a small country town, the conversation at supper turned

on the subject of speech-making. Mr Wilkie Collins remarked that he had invariably felt a difficulty when called upon for a speech either at a public meeting or after dinner, adding that for important occasions his habit was to make notes of what he had to say, and keep them before him for reference during the progress of the speech.

"As is well known, Mr Dickens was one of the happiest of speakers, and on all occasions without any notes to assist him in this most difficult of arts. Declaring that to make a speech was the easiest thing in the world, he said the only difficulty that existed was in introducing the subject to be dealt with. 'Now suppose I am the president of a rowing club and Dolby is the honorary secretary. At our farewell dinner, or supper, for the season, I, as president, should propose his health in these words':

"Here he made a speech of the most flattering description, calling on the subject of it for a reply. As I did not feel equal to a response I asked Mr Collins to try his skill first. He handed the responsibility over to Mr Wills, who in his turn handed it back to Mr Dickens, who then told us in a ludicrous speech what the honorary secretary ought to have said, though I am certain no ordinary honorary secretary would ever have dreamt of such a performance. Then I asked Mr Dickens if he could explain to us his *modus operandi* of preparing an important speech, Mr Wilkie Collins adding that it would be curious to know what (besides the speech) was passing in his mind during its delivery. He told us that, supposing the speech was to be delivered in the evening, his habit was to take a long walk in the morning, during which he would decide on the various heads to be dealt with. These being

arranged in their proper order, he would in his 'mind's eye,' liken the whole subject to the tire of a cart wheel—he being the hub. From the hub to the tire he would run as many spokes as there were subjects to be treated, and during the progress of the speech he would deal with each spoke separately, elaborating them as he went round the wheel; and when all the spokes dropped out one by one, and nothing but the tire and space remained, he would know that he had accomplished his task, and that his speech was at an end.

"Mr Wills suggested that if he were in this position, the wheel would whiz round with such rapidity that he would see nothing but space to commence with, and that, without notes or memoranda, in space he would be left —a conclusion in which Mr Wilkie Collins and I fully concurred."

Pleasant as it would be so to do, we must not linger over the oft-told tale of this American visit. A public banquet of "farewell" was given to Dickens at New York, under the Presidency of Horace Greeley, at Delmonico's famous restaurant, on April 18, 1868. There were two hundred guests present, including such well-known literary men as George William Curtis, Charles Eliot Norton, Henry John Raymond and many others equally eminent. The scene was brilliant, the speaking—as ever at a dinner of Americans—admirable.

After the final reading Dickens uttered a few words of "good-bye"; from which we quote :—

"When I was reading 'David Copperfield' a few evenings since, I felt there was more than usual significance in the words of Peggotty, 'My future life lies over the sea;' and when I closed this book just now, I felt most keenly that I was shortly to establish such an *alibi*

as would have satisfied even the elder Mr Weller. The relations which have been set up between us, while they have involved for me something more than mere devotion to a task, have been by you sustained with the readiest sympathy and the kindest acknowledgment.

"These relations must now be broken for ever. Be assured, however, that you will not pass from my mind. I shall often realise you as I see you now, equally by my winter fireside, and in the green English summer weather. I shall never recall you as a mere public audience, but rather as a host of personal friends, and ever with the greatest gratitude, tenderness, and consideration. Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to bid you farewell. God bless you, and God bless the land in which I leave you."

Dickens sailed for home from New York upon the Cunarder "Russia" on April 22, and the *New York Tribune* gave the next day a vivid account of the departure :—

"It was a lovely day—a clear blue sky overhead—as he stood resting on the rail, chatting with his friends, and writing an autograph for that one, the genial face all aglow with delight, it was seemingly hard to say the word 'Farewell,' yet the tug-boat screamed the note of warning, and those who must return to the city went down the side.

"All left save Mr Fields. 'Boz' held the hand of the publisher within his own. There was an unmistakable look in both faces. The lame foot came down from the rail, and the friends were locked in each other's arms.

"Mr Fields then hastened down the side, not daring to look behind. The lines were 'cast off.'

"A cheer was given for Mr Dolby, when Mr Dickens patted him approvingly upon the shoulder, saying,

'Good boy.' Another cheer for Mr Dickens, and the tug steamed away.

"'Good-bye, Boz.'

"'Good-bye,' from Mr Fields, who stood the central figure of a group of three, Messrs Du Chaillu and Childs upon each side. Then 'Boz' put his hat upon his cane, and waved it, and the answer came 'Good-bye,' and 'God bless you every one.'"

XXXVIII

LAST DAYS AND DEATH

THE journey home worked a most beneficial effect upon his health, which, however, Dickens discounted by toiling strenuously at further Readings, until at length there came a complete breakdown and doctors' orders for rest. Of these last days we have already seen somewhat in the account given by Dolby of the trip from Gad's Hill to Canterbury. For the final London Readings he took the house of the Milner Gibsons at 5 Hyde Park Place. Of the Farewell Reading on Tuesday, March 15th, we must give a brief account. St James's Hall, Piccadilly, was thronged with a gathering representative of all conditions of men and women, numbering over 2000, the whole of the platform being screened off for the "reader." The "readings" chosen were the "Christmas Carol" and the "Trial from Pickwick." Punctually to the moment, eight o'clock, but evidently affected by the excitement of the occasion, Dickens appeared, and the huge audience sprang to their feet, greeting him with an uproar of cheers. After the readings he was "called" again and again, and at last nerved himself to say "good-bye." Charles Kent, one of his closest friends, who was present, thus describes the closing scene, "the manly, cordial voice only faltered once at the very last, the mournful modulation of it in the utterance of the words, 'From these garish lights I vanish

now for evermore,' linger . . . like a haunting melody in our remembrance. . . . As he moved from the platform after the utterance of the last words of the address, and, with his head drooping in emotion, passed behind the screen on the way to his retiring-room, a cordial hand (my own !) was placed for one moment with a sympathetic grasp upon his shoulder." Dolby relates that he left the platform at last "with quite a mournful gait, and tears rolling down his cheeks. But he had to go forward yet once again, to be stunned by a more surprising outburst than before."

Altogether between April 29, 1858, at St Martin's Hall, and March 15, 1870, at St James's Hall, he had in Great Britain, Ireland and America, given 423 Readings, clearing profit to the amount of, at least, £45,000.

Dickens now looked forward to enjoying complete freedom to devote himself to "Edwin Drood," of which, however, only six monthly parts were issued by Messrs Chapman and Hall, beginning in April, 1870. The illustrations were drawn by Sir Luke Fildes, R.A., who was brought to Dickens's notice by Millais, and the cover designed by Charles Allston Collins. Sir Luke Fildes, R.A., was born upon Saint Luke's day in the year 1844, and settled in London in 1862. In 1869 Millais went to Dickens, who was searching vainly to find an artist for "Edwin Drood," and exclaimed, "I've found your man," showing him the picture of "The Casuals," in the first issue of *The Graphic*. "Yes, but can he draw a pretty girl ?" asked Dickens. The artist saw much of Dickens, who was then staying at Hyde Park Place, opposite the Marble Arch, and was ready to start on a visit to Gad's Hill, when he picked up a newspaper and read the announcement "Death of Charles Dickens." "The

death of Dickens," he says, "had an extraordinary effect upon me. It seemed as though the cup of happiness had been dashed from my lips." It is not necessary to touch upon the aggravating controversy that is still raging round the "Mystery."

They were happy and not uneventful days, these last in London. The situation suited him; the bright view over Hyde Park, the noise of traffic from early morning to late hours of the night, all were to his taste.

One evening when entertaining Sir Arthur Helps, Dickens showed to him a collection of photographs of the battlefields of the American Civil War; these Sir Arthur chanced to mention to Queen Victoria, who expressed a wish to see them, whereupon the book containing them was forwarded to Her Majesty. Desiring to see Dickens, he attended one March afternoon at Buckingham Palace. Dolby gives a good account of the interview:—

"The Queen was in London only for a day or two, and Dickens imagined, not unnaturally, that the innumerable calls on the time and attention of Her Majesty would leave space for an interview of about a quarter of an hour. So, as the time appointed was five in the afternoon, he engaged me to meet him in the Burlington Arcade at half-past, when we were to dine together at the 'Blue Posts,' in Cork Street. However, the Chief had grievously miscalculated the probable duration of that interview, for instead of lasting ten or fifteen minutes, it was prolonged for an hour and a half. It was half-past six when he put in an appearance at our place of meeting.

"When his brougham pulled up at the Piccadilly end of the Arcade, I could see that the interview had been an agreeable one, for he was radiant with smiles. Stepping

out of his carriage, he gave hasty instructions to his servant to drive straight home, and to take particular care of a book he had left inside, which was to be given to Miss Dickens the moment he arrived at Hyde Park Place.

"Slipping his arm in mine, we passed through the Arcade and proceeded at once to our dining-place, where I had caused his favourite corner to be kept for him. Having settled down to our dinner, I was naturally anxious to hear from his own lips what Her Majesty and the Chief could have found to talk about for an hour and a half.

"'Tell me everything,' I said, modestly.

"'Everything! my dear fellow, everything! I tell you what, it would be difficult to say what we did *not* talk about,' was his reply.

"'Well, then,' I said, 'let me have *some* of it, unless they were all State secrets.'

"He then went on to tell me that Her Majesty had received him most graciously, and that, as Court etiquette requires that no one, in an ordinary interview with the Sovereign, should be seated, Her Majesty had remained the whole time leaning over the head of a sofa. There was a little shyness on both sides at the commencement, but this wore away as the conversation proceeded.

"Her Majesty expressed her deep regret at not having heard one of the Readings, and although highly flattered at this, Dickens could only express his sorrow that, as these were now finally done with, and as, moreover, a mixed audience was absolutely necessary for their success, it would be impossible to gratify Her Majesty's wishes in this particular. This, he said, the Queen fully appreciated, quoting to Mr Dickens his own words in his farewell speech: 'From these garish lights I vanish now for

evermore," and remarking that even if such a thing were possible, there would be inconsistency in it, which was evidently not one of Mr Dickens's characteristics. After referring in complimentary terms to the pleasure Her Majesty had derived in witnessing Mr Dickens's acting in the 'Frozen Deep,' as far back as the year 1857, the conversation took a general turn. The Queen showed much interest and curiosity in regard to Mr Dickens's recent American experiences, and some reference was made to a supposed discourtesy that had been shown in America on one occasion to Prince Arthur. This, Dickens was very anxious to explain away, assuring the Queen that no true-hearted Americans were in sympathy with the Fenian body in that country; and that nowhere in the world was there a warmer feeling towards the English Queen than existed throughout the whole of the United States (a sentiment which Her Majesty was pleased to hear from so observant an authority). The Chief told me, with a good deal of unction, that Her Majesty had then graciously asked his opinion on the 'servant question.' Could he account for the fact 'that we have no good servants in England as in the olden times'? Mr Dickens regretted that he could not account for this fact, except perhaps on the hypothesis that our system of education was a wrong one. On this same subject of national education, he added, he had his own ideas, but saw no likelihood of their being carried into effect. The price of provisions, the cost of butchers' meat, and bread, were next lightly touched upon, and so the conversation rippled on agreeably to an agreeable end. But the interview did not close until the Queen, with gracious modesty, had begged Mr Dickens's acceptance at her own hands of a copy of the 'Journal in the Highlands,' in which Her

Majesty had placed an autograph inscription, and her own sign manual. This was the book which the coachman had been so particularly enjoined to give into Miss Dickens's own hands.

"The Queen, on handing the book to Mr Dickens, modestly remarked that she felt considerable hesitation in presenting so humble a literary effort to one of the foremost writers of the age. She had, Her Majesty said, requested Mr Helps to present it for her; but as he had suggested that the gift would be more highly prized by Mr Dickens if he received it from Her Majesty's own hands, she had resolved herself on this bold act. After asking Mr Dickens to look kindly on any literary faults of her book, Her Majesty expressed a desire to be the possessor of a complete set of Mr Dickens's works, and added that, if possible, she would like to receive them that afternoon.

"Mr Dickens, of course, was only too pleased to gratify the wishes of the Queen, but begged to be allowed to defer sending his books until he had had a set specially bound for Her Majesty's acceptance. This was done in due course, and the receipt of the books was acknowledged in the name of the Queen by Mr Helps, in a letter written from Balmoral, dated and posted on the day of Mr Dickens's death!"

By the Queen's command he attended a levee held by the Prince of Wales in April, and there was much fun over the "fancy dress." A few friends lunched with him on the day, "just to see how he looked in his cocked hat and sword." "We got a good deal of fun out of the 'make-up,'" says Dolby, "in which Dickens heartily joined, but the climax was his utter bewilderment on the subject of the cocked hat. Fancy Dickens in a cocked hat!

" What on earth am I to do with it ? " he asked, handing it about in a woe-begone manner.

" Why wear it of course," suggested one of the party.

" But how ? " cried the Chief.

" Yes, that's exactly what I have been wondering," said another.

" What do you mean, sir ? " said Dickens, with mock indignation. " What difference can it make to *you* which way I wear it ? "

" Oh ! none at all. I was merely wondering whether you intended to wear it ' fore and aft,' or ' th'wart ships ' ; and I thought I would mention that those I had seen were generally worn ' fore and aft.' "

Mr Dickens's reception of this lesson on the wearing of a cocked hat was comic in the extreme ; for some had said, ' it was not intended to be worn, and was a mere appendage any way,' others were of opinion that ' it was to be carried under the arm,' and so on. However, as it was time to start, Dickens tucked the thing under his arm, and, turning to me, said, ' Come along, Dolby, drive down to Buckingham Palace with me, and leave me in good society, where at least I shall be free of these ignorant people ! " '

The last time he dined out in London was at Lord Houghton's, to meet the King of the Belgians and the Prince of Wales ; Lady Houghton recorded that she had never seen Dickens " more agreeable than at a dinner at our house about a fortnight before his death." Forster records a luncheon at Hyde Park Place on May 22, on which day Dickens had heard of the death of Mark Lemon, and, referring to his many comrades in art and letters who had already fallen out of the ranks, said, " and none beyond his sixtieth year, very few even fifty."

At the end of May he returned to Gad's Hill Place.

During these last years he seems to have changed greatly in appearance. He was, says Sala of this time, "a bronzed, weatherworn, hardy man, with somewhat of a seaman's air about him. His carriage was remarkedly upright, his mien almost aggressive in its confidence. . . . His appearance in walking dress in the streets, during his later years, was decidedly 'odd,' and almost eccentric, being marked by strongly-pronounced colours, and a fashioning of the garments which had somewhat of a sporting and somewhat of a theatrical guise. To those who did not know that he was Charles Dickens, he might have been some prosperous sea-captain home from a long voyage, some Western senator on a tour in Europe, some country gentleman of Devon or Yorkshire."

"I had met him about the middle of May,[1] at Charing Cross, and had remarked that he had aged very much in appearance. The thought-lines of his face had deepened, and the hair had whitened. Indeed, as he approached me I thought for a moment I was mistaken, and that it could not be Dickens: for that was not the vigorous, rapid walk, with the stick lightly held in the alert hand, which had always belonged to him. It was he, however: but with a certain solemnity of expression in the face, and a deeper earnestness in the dark eyes. However, when he saw me and shook my hand, the delightful brightness and sunshine swept over the gloom and sadness," so wrote Blanchard Jerrold.

His daughter "Mamie" writes, "although happy and contented, there was an appearance of fatigue and weariness about him very unlike his usual air of fresh activity."

[1] 1870.

The weather was beautifully fine, the house had never worn a brighter aspect, the garden was full of the brilliant flowers he loved. Of the many improvements that he had made, the addition of a conservatory was the last; "Here, Katie," he said to his daughter, "you behold the last improvement." Of Sunday, June 5, Miss Dickens writes, "We had been having most lovely weather, and in consequence, the outdoor plants were wonderfully forward in their bloom, my father's favourite red geraniums making a blaze of colour in the front garden. The syringa shrubs filled the evening air with sweetest fragrance as we sat in the porch and walked about the garden on this last Sunday of our dear father's life."

On Monday the sisters, Kate and "Mamie" left for London. Of leave-takings, her father had ever a dislike, but some impulse compelled Kate to say, "I *must* say good-bye to papa." He was at work in the châlet in the shrubbery, and there—at his wish—she bade him farewell.

On Tuesday, he went for his last walk in Cobham Park, and in the evening, talking with Miss Hogarth, spoke of his affection for Gad's Hill Place, of his gladness that he had not given it up and returned to live in London, of his hope that his name might be associated with it, and of his wish to be buried there.

On the Wednesday, the 8th, he was busily working at "Edwin Drood" all day in the châlet, going across to the house for luncheon, when he appeared well and cheerful. After a cigar in the conservatory, he returned to his desk. Dinner was fixed for six o'clock, and when he came again to the house about five, he appeared "tired, silent, and abstracted," which was not unusual with him after a stiff day's work. He wrote some letters, including one to Charles Kent, making an appointment with him in

London for the next day, which as one of the two last he wrote, we will quote in full :—

"Gad's Hill Place,
"Higham by Rochester,
"Wednesday *eighth June* 1870.

"My dear Kent,

To-morrow is a very bad day for me to make a call, as, in addition to my usual office business, I have a mass of accounts to settle with Wills. But I hope I may be ready for you at 3 o'clock. If I can't be—why, then I shan't be.

You must really get rid of these Opal enjoyments. They are overpowering.

'These violent delights have violent ends.'

I think it was a father of your church who made the wise remark to a young gentleman who got up early (and stayed out late) at Verona ?

Ever affectionately,

C. D."

The other of these two letters is in itself more interesting as it is in reply to one addressed to him in reference to a passage in the tenth chapter of "Edwin Drood," where the Reverend Septimus yields himself up to his mother's medicaments, "like the highly popular lamb who has so long and unresistingly been led to the slaughter," which, according to the writer, "was distasteful to some of his admirers," being drawn from Holy Writ, and prophetic of the sacrifice of Christ. Dickens very rightly expressed amazement that anyone could attach a scriptural reference to the passage, concluding, "I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour ; because I feel it ; and because I re-wrote that history for my children—every one of

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"These violent delights have violent ends"

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Ever affectionately

CD

THE LAST LETTER.

whom knew it from having it repeated to them—long before they could read, and almost as soon as they could speak.

"But I have never made proclamation of this from the house-tops."

When Miss Hogarth and he sat down to dinner, she noticed, soon after the meal had commenced, a "striking change in the colour and expression of his face." She asked him if he were ill, and he replied, "Yes, very ill; I have been very ill for the last hour." He refused to permit a doctor to be summoned, and continued to talk. though incoherently, speaking of a sale at a neighbouring house, of Macready, of his own departure to London; then rising from his seat, staggered and was only saved from falling by the prompt aid of his sister-in-law. She begged him to lie down; "Yes, on the ground," were his last words.

"This was at a few minutes after six o'clock," says Miss Dickens, "I was dining at a house some little distance from my sister's home. Dinner was half over when I received a message that she wished to speak to me. I found her in the hall with a change of dress for me and a cab in waiting. Quickly I changed my gown, and we begun the short journey which brought us to our so sadly-altered home. Our dear aunt was waiting for us at the open door, and when I saw her face I think the last faint hope died within me." He remained in the same unconscious condition until a few minutes past six o'clock the next evening, that of Thursday, June 9, "when . . the watchers saw a shudder pass over him, heard him give a deep sigh, saw one tear roll down his cheek, and he was gone from them."

It is said that he had always desired to die suddenly,

and the story is told of his walking through Kensington Gardens when a thunderstorm broke overhead and proposing to the friend with him to shelter under a tree. "No," said the friend, "that is too dangerous. Many people have been killed beneath trees from the effect of lightning." To which Dickens responded, "of all the fears that harass a man on God's earth, the fear of sudden death seems to me the most absurd, and why we pray against it in the Litany I cannot make out. A death by lightning most resembles the translation of Enoch."

When she read the announcement of his death, "the sun seemed suddenly blotted out," says Mrs Cowden Clarke. Carlyle wrote to Gad's Hill, "It is almost thirty years since my acquaintance with him began; and on my side, I may say, every new meeting ripened it into more and more dear discernment of his rare and great worth as a brother man; a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just, and loving man: till at length he had grown to such a recognition with me as I have rarely had for any man of my time."

XXXIX

CHARLES DICKENS

THAT "you may know a man by his friends" is an old and true saying, and we cannot but feel that we know Charles Dickens the more thoroughly by reason of the intimate converse that we have held with him and with some of his friends in these pages.

But for our part we would count as among a man's best friends the books and pictures which appeal to him and which he loves. Let us take a glance at the outward seeming of his books as they appeared to a friend of his. G. H. Lewes called on him in Doughty Street, "those who remember him at that period," he writes, "will understand the somewhat disturbing effect produced on my enthusiasm for the new author by the sight of his bookshelves, on which were ranged nothing but three-volume novels and books of travel, all obviously the presentation copies from authors and publishers, with none of the treasures of the bookstall, each of which has its history, and all giving the collection its individual physiognomy. A man's library expresses much of his hidden life. . . . He shortly came in, and his sunny presence quickly dispelled all misgivings. He was then, as to the last, a delightful companion, full of sagacity as well as animal spirits; but I came away more impressed with the fullness of life and energy than with any sense of distinction.

Then of a later visit, " while waiting in his library (in Devonshire Terrace) I, of course glanced at the books. The well-known paper boards of the three-volume novel no longer vulgarised the place ; a goodly array of standard works, well-bound, showed a more respectable and conventional ambition ; but there was no physiognomy in the collection. A greater change was visible in Dickens himself. In these two years he had remarkably developed. His conversation turned on graver subjects than theatres and actors, periodicals and London life. His interest in public affairs, especially in social questions, was keener. He still remained completely outside philosophy, science, and the higher literature, and was too unaffected a man to pretend to feel any interest in them."

Of the book-loves of his childhood Forster tells us that a passage in " David Copperfield " is literally true, and we may quote it with advantage :—" My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs to which I had access . . . From that blessed little room, *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *Tom Jones*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, and *Robinson Crusoe* came out, a glorious host, to keep me company." Other books there were, the *Arabian Nights* and the *Tales of the Genii*, of all which the influence can be traced in his own works.

In a letter to George Cattermole in 1838 he mentions " Kenilworth," " which I have just been reading with greater delight than ever," and adds that among other books he has with him at Petersham are Goldsmith, Swift, Fielding, Smollett and the British Essayists. Writing to M de Cerjat, he says, " Let me recommend you, as a brother-reader of high distinction, two comedies, both Goldsmith's—' She Stoops to Conquer ' and ' The Good-

natured Man.' Both are so admirably and so delightfully written that they read wonderfully."

We may note in passing that of Shakespeare he says, " It is a great comfort, to my way of thinking, that so little is known concerning the poet. It is a fine mystery ; and I tremble every day lest something should come out. If he had had a Boswell, society wouldn't have respected his grave."

Of Smollett :—" ' Humphrey Clinker ' is certainly Smollett's best. I am rather divided between ' Peregrine Pickle ' and ' Roderick Random,' both extraordinarily good in their way, which is a way without tenderness." Turning to a contemporary writer, he says of Tennyson, " How fine the ' Idylls ' are ! Lord ! What a blessed thing it is to read a man who can write ! I thought nothing could be grander than the first poem till I came to the third ; but when I had read the last, it seemed to be absolutely unapproached and unapproachable."

J. T. Fields tells us of him, " There were certain books of which Dickens liked to talk during his walks. Among his special favourites were the writings of Cobbett, De Quincey, the ' Lectures on Moral Philosophy ' by Sydney Smith, and Carlyle's ' French Revolution.' "

In short, with regard to Art, Literature, and Music, Dickens was in no sense of the words an expert critic but an impressionist, without any other standard than his own likings. For his writings upon pictures we had best turn to the " Pictures from Italy," in which he says :—

" I am not mechanically acquainted with the art of painting, and have no other means of judging of a picture than as I see it resembling and refining upon nature, and presenting graceful combinations of forms and colours. I am, therefore, no authority whatever, in reference to the

' touch ' of this or that master ; though I know very well (as anybody may, who chooses to think about the matter) that few very great masters can possibly have painted, in the compass of their lives, one-half of the pictures that bear their names, and that are recognised by many aspirants to a reputation for taste, as undoubted originals. But this, by the way. Of the Last Supper, I would simply observe, that in its beautiful composition and arrangement, there it is, at Milan, a wonderful picture ; and that, in its original colouring, or in its original expression of any single face or feature, there it is not. Apart from the damage it has sustained from damp, decay, or neglect, it has been (as Barry shows) so retouched upon, and repainted, and that so clumsily, that many of the heads are, now, positive deformities, with patches of paint and plaster sticking upon them like wens, and utterly distorting the expression. Where the original artist set that impress of his genius on a face, which, almost in a line or touch, separated him from meaner painters and made him what he was, succeeding bunglers, filling up, or painting across seams and cracks, have been quite unable to imitate his hand ; and putting in some scowls, or frowns, or wrinkles, of their own, have blotched and spoiled the work. This is so well established as an historical fact, that I should not repeat it, at the risk of being tedious, but for having observed an English gentleman before the picture, who was at great pains to fall into what I may describe as mild convulsions, at certain minute details of expression which are not left in it. Whereas, it would be comfortable and rational for travellers and critics to arrive at a general understanding that it cannot fail to have been a work of extraordinary merit, once : when, with so few of its original beauties remaining, the grandeur of the general design is yet

sufficient to sustain it, as a piece replete with interest and dignity."

It will be remembered that he made a biting and quite foolish onslaught upon one of the most famous of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Of English art—in his own day—compared with French, he thought but poorly on the whole of our painters :—" there is a horrible respectability about most of the best of them—a little, finite, systematic routine in them, strangely expressive to me of the state of England itself."

Of music he says and writes but little, and indeed appears to have cared not much for it, save in the form of jovial or sentimental songs, and as incidental music to melodramas, though when in Paris, in 1863, he heard Gounod's " Faust," writing of it, " It is a splendid work, in which that noble and sad story is most nobly and sadly rendered, and perfectly delighted me."

Dickens was in essence a profoundly religious, Christian man, and here, as elsewhere, we think it by far the better way to allow him to speak for himself. This is from his letter to his youngest son on his leaving for Australia in 1868, " You will remember that you have never at home been wearied about religious observances or mere formalities. I have always been anxious not to weary my children with such things before they are old enough to form opinions respecting them. You will therefore understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion, as it came from Christ Himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it."

Earlier, in 1864, he wrote to M de Cerjat, " As to the Church, my friend, I am sick of it. The spectacle pre-

sented by the indecent squabbles of priests of most denominations, and the exemplary unfairness and rancour with which they conduct their differences, utterly repel me. And the idea of the Protestant Establishment, in the face of its own history, seeking to trample out discussion and private judgement, is an enormity so cool, that I wonder the Right Reverends, Very Reverends, and all other Reverends, who commit it, can look in one another's faces without laughing, as the old soothsayers did. Perhaps they can't and don't. How our sublime and so-different Christian religion is to be administered in the future I cannot pretend to say, but that the Church's hand is at its own throat I am fully convinced. Here, more Popery, there, more Methodism—as many forms of consignment to eternal damnation as there are articles, and all in one for ever quarrelling body—the Master of the New Testament put out of sight, and the rage and fury almost always turning on the letter of obscure parts of the Old Testament, which itself has been the subject of accommodation, adaptation, varying interpretation without end—these things cannot last. The Church that is to have its part in the coming time must be a more Christian one, with less arbitrary pretensions and a stronger hold upon the mantle of our Saviour, as He walked and talked upon this earth."

" Do you ever pray ? " Ada, Lady Lovelace, asked him on her death-bed ; " Every morning and evening," he answered.

As to Dickens's political views, he may be described as a sentimental, rather than a practical, Radical. It was personal sympathy with the lot of the suffering that stirred him, but of practical and effective reform he had but vague ideas. He wrote to Forster, in 1855, " a country

which is discovered to be in this tremendous condition as to its war affairs; with an enormous black cloud of poverty in every town which is spreading and deepening every hour, and not one man in two thousand knowing anything about, or even believing in, its existence; with a non-working aristocracy, and a silent parliament, and every-body for himself and nobody for the rest; this is the prospect, and I think it is a very deplorable one."

As to the personal appearance and character of the man so much evidence has already been brought together in these pages that we need add but little more.

During the first visit to America, in 1842, Longfellow describes him "a gay, free-and-easy character; with a fine bright face, blue eyes, and long dark hair," and a Cincinnati lady wrote of him, "He is young and handsome, has a mellow beautiful eye, fine brow, and abundant hair. . . . His manner is easy—negligent—but not elegant. His dress was foppish; in fact, he was over-dressed, yet his garments were worn so easily they appeared to be a necessary part of him."

Richard Hengist Horne, in 1844, gave in "A New Spirit of the Age" a somewhat breathless account of Dickens:—"He talks much or little according to his sympathies. His conversation is genial. He hates argument; in fact, he is unable to argue—a common case with impulsive characters who see the whole truth, and feel it crowding and struggling at once for immediate utterance. He never talks for effect, but for the truth or for the fun of the thing. He tells a story admirably, and generally with humorous exaggerations. His sympathies are of the broadest, and his literary tastes appreciate all excellence. He is a great admirer of the poetry of Tennyson. Mr Dickens has singular personal activity, and is fond of

games of practical skill. He is also a great walker, and very much given to dancing Sir Roger de Coverley. In private, the general impression of him is that of a first-rate practical intellect, with ' no nonsense ' about him."

Thomas Adolphus Trollope was an enthusiastic admirer of Dickens's personality ; " he was a *hearty* man, a large-hearted man that is to say. He was perhaps the largest-hearted man I ever knew," he says.

For an unfavourable view of Dickens's character Dr John Brown may be quoted. He writes to Ruskin, in 1873, " My reasons for saying he was hard-hearted are—1st, my personal knowledge of him many years ago, and my seeing then his intense, adamantine egoism. 2nd, the revelation of his nature given so frankly, and let us hope unconsciously, in his friend's huge and most exaggerated life (Forster is a ' heavy swell,' and has always been to me offensive, and he has no sense or faculty of humour, and is, as the boy called him, a ' harbitrary cove '). . . . He was a man softest outside, hardest at the core." George Henry Lewes said to Mrs Lynn Linton, " Dickens would not give you a farthing of money, but he would take no end of trouble for you. He would spend a whole day, for instance, in looking for the most suitable lodgings for you, and would spare himself neither time nor fatigue."

George Eliot says of Dickens in 1852, " His appearance is certainly disappointing, no benevolence in the face, and, I think, little in the head . . . in fact, he is not distinguished-looking in any way—neither handsome nor ugly, neither fat nor thin, neither tall nor short."

To conclude :—One who knew him intimately for many years describes him as full of fun, charming in manner ; equipped with *bonhomie* and considerable shrewdness ; a

man to whom a woman would go for advice; but a domineering man, fond of his own way and not over fond of those who tried to deny it to him.

It may be taken as written of himself that which we read in "David Copperfield," "I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence; without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time, no matter how quickly its successor should come upon its heels. . . . My meaning simply is, that whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well; that whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely; that, in great aims and in small, I have always been thoroughly in earnest. . . . Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self; and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was; I find, now, to have been my golden rules."

* * * * * *

It has not come within the scope of this book to deal critically or otherwise with Dickens as a man of letters, and it would be a too curious inquiry to ask whether his personality would have been worth studying or not had he not been one of the most influential as well as famous of English writers. An author's works can be, and many hold should be, studied apart from the biography of their creator, but be that as it may, there cannot be any doubt that a knowledge of the writer, intimate if possible, adds zest to the pleasure of the reader and not seldom, also, to his understanding.

We leave it to our readers to form, with the evidence here provided them, what idea they may of the physical personality of Charles Dickens; of his character we will say a few words. It is indubitable that much damage

has been done to his fame both as a man and as a writer by indiscreet admirers, who, dazzled by his genius, have been unable to see any fault in his writings or any flaw in his character. To set him up on a pedestal as a minor god only detracts from his high standing as a great man; not only that, but the virtues of a human being shine all the brighter by contrast with his failings.

Of few men is the opinion of their contemporaries so strongly favourable as it is in the case of Dickens, and the evidence is all the more powerful in that it comes from all sorts and conditions of men and women, chiefly, however, from the former. Few women of any great strength of character or power of will appear to have been among his intimates. Among his men friends, too, he was a leader, rather than an equal, with some rare exceptions, such as Carlyle and Lytton. We can trace all through his life, even after his first taste of success, a tendency toward despotism. He was a managing, masterful man, so much so that at times he would quarrel with those who quite rightly opposed his wishes.

He was in a sense a superficial man; his emotions were easily stirred, and—as with easily stirred waters—were not very profound; sentiment with him was apt to degenerate into sentimentality, tragedy to become melodrama, comedy to become farce; these things both in his life and in his books. He was not a scholar, for which, of course, he was in no way to blame, and his judgments of literature and the arts cannot be called otherwise than middle-class. In all his instincts and ambitions he was of the state of life in which he was born, middle-class; he showed this in his art as well as in his life. It must not be thought that we are using the term middle-

class as one of opprobrium, but it is distinctly, and in this case truly, definitive.

Set in the balance against these defects his gifts weigh far the heavier. We cannot sum them up better than by repeating Carlyle's eulogium, "The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens—every inch of him an Honest Man." How great praise that from how great a source!

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We send forth these pages, with all their sins of omission and commission, in full confidence that they will prove welcome to many a lover of Charles Dickens. To our critical readers we would say that we have made no pretence of completeness; all our aim has been to gather together sufficient facts concerning Charles Dickens and some of his Friends, and so to join them together as to make it possible to form a true picture of a strenuous man and of the strenuous life he led.

THE END.

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